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# GOD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

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ROBERT AYTOUN

# GOD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

STUDIES IN  
GRADUAL PERCEPTION

BY THE LATE  
ROBERT ALEXANDER AYTOUN, M.A.

FIRST PROFESSOR OF OLD TESTAMENT LITERATURE  
AND RELIGION AT THE SELWY OAK COLLEGES.

WITH MEMOIR

BY  
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## MEMOIR

THE use of the Old Testament in religious training is still a problem, both to teachers and parents. There is a tendency in some quarters to ignore the Old Testament or to use it only as a foil to the New. This is unfortunate as the positive contribution of the Hebrew Scriptures to the maintenance of personal religion is far greater than such neglect or depreciation would suggest. In dealing with this problem we need a combination of critical honesty and fearlessness with a sense of continued indebtedness to the record of God's progressive revelation. Such a union of criticism and devotion may be found in the present volume. It is the work of one who was himself a thoughtful, experienced and inspiring teacher. The manuscript was left practically complete but not finally revised by the author when he was taken from us by an early death. In many places it lacks the literary finish which is found in his other published work and which no editor can give without going beyond his office. With the minimum of necessary revision the book is now published, as a token of gratitude and love, by those who were Robert Aytoun's students at Woodbrooke. The book itself will show something of his qualities as a teacher, but it is only fitting that the witness of the book be prefaced by some few particulars of his life and character.

Robert Alexander Aytoun was born in Fraserburgh, Aberdeenshire, on February 22nd, 1879, the son of Robert and Mary Aytoun. His mother's maiden name was Laing. He belonged on his father's side to an old and distinguished Scottish family which can trace its forebears back to Saxon times. The outstanding names on the family-list are connected either with military service or with literature. Andrew Aytoun was governor of Stirling Castle, in the time of King James IV. He and his son, John, fell with the king and the flower of Scottish nobility at Flodden Field in 1513. The long line of Aytouns who have been soldiers has been honourably closed with the name of Robert Aytoun's brother Ernest, who was killed in the Great War. Robert himself was interested in things martial. When at Cambridge he joined the University Rifle Volunteer Corps, and became what was familiarly called a "Bugshooter." His health would always have unfitted him for active service, and he later came to doubt the lawfulness of war for a Christian. But he retained many of the soldier's virtues, and above all, the virtue of loyalty.

On the literary side, the most distinguished names in the Aytoun family are those of two poets. One, Sir Robert Aytoun, was Court-poet to James VI of Scotland and I of England, while the second was William Edmondstoun Aytoun, the well-known author of "Lays of the Scottish Cavaliers." Though Robert Aytoun was not himself a poet, something of this gift descended to him. He was a keen musician with some power of composing. To discuss music with him was always stimulating, and

to listen to him as he improvised on the organ or piano was a great delight. Perhaps the sense of harmony and rhythm which dwelt in him helped to determine his critical interests. At least he followed closely the metrical developments of Biblical criticism and some of his own technical papers, published and unpublished, are devoted to questions of poetic form. One of the most daring and suggestive of his enquiries of this kind was his attempt to discover Hebrew Hymns of the Nativity in the opening chapters of Luke's Gospel. The paper appeared in the *Journal of Theological Studies* for July, 1917. His work as a Biblical critic shows some trace of the poetic genius which appeared in other members of the family.

The main branch of the Aytoun family, of which Robert Aytoun was the head at the time of his death, was descended from a younger son of Andrew Aytoun, —a Robert Aytoun who held the estates of Inchdairnie and Balgregie in Fifeshire. These family estates would normally have come into Robert Aytoun's possession, but his father never received them as the previous occupier diverted them into other channels. Had there been an entail, Robert Aytoun would probably have been a Scottish laird and might never have been a Presbyterian minister. For himself he did not regret the chance that deprived him of wealth and the responsibility of landed property. He was prouder of his calling as teacher and minister of the Gospel than of the position he might have held as landowner in Fifeshire.

His boyhood was spent south of the border. His father was a civil engineer, and held for some years an



appointment at Scarborough under the corporation. In this capacity he was responsible for the construction of the main sea-wall at Scarborough and for the draining of the Clarence Gardens. His son's early days were thus spent in Scarborough and the boy's first schooling was received there. Later Mr. Aytoun moved south and his son, Robert, went to Tonbridge School. From Tonbridge, Robert Aytoun matriculated at London, and then entered Aberdeen University on a Scholarship in 1897. The winning of a further substantial scholarship enabled him to go to Cambridge in 1899. He went up to Emmanuel College in that year. The Puritan and Evangelical traditions of Emmanuel were congenial to one whose mind was already drawn to the ministry. He naturally decided to read for the Theological Tripos. This brought him under the influence of the late Professor H. M. Gwatkin, who did so much to broaden and illumine the study of Church History for many generations of Cambridge men. Like many others, Robert Aytoun fell under the spell, and much of his keen interest in Church History dates from his attendance at Gwatkin's lectures,—an interest that was to bear fruit later in his book, "The City-centres of Christianity." His scholastic career was successful and happy. He became a Scholar of his college, and he took the theological tripos in 1902. Having graduated, he applied for admission to Westminster College,—the Theological College of the Presbyterian Church of England, which had recently moved from London to Cambridge. At the time when Robert Aytoun entered it, Dr. Oswald Dykes was Principal of the College. Perhaps, the finest



side of Dykes' influence lay in the high value he set on preaching. He was himself a great preacher, and he put high ideals before his students. Aytoun's love of preaching, and care in preaching owed something to contact with Principal Dykes. But the chief formative influence in his time at Westminster was that of John Skinner, then Professor of Hebrew and Old Testament Literature and later successor to Dr. Dykes as Principal. Dr. Skinner strengthened all Aytoun's interest in the literature and language of the Old Testament. But more than that, he deepened the fearless fidelity to truth which Aytoun carried into all his thought and faith thereafter. Dr. Skinner helped him to realise the religious significance of that patient endeavour after accuracy which is perhaps the best gift of Cambridge to her sons and daughters.

While at Cambridge, Robert Aytoun formed the desire to serve abroad as a missionary, and at the close of his ministerial training he offered for work in China under the Presbyterian Board of Missions. The work he contemplated was connected with a missionary college in Amoy. If he had been able to go, he would have been head of the College, and engaged in work such as he would have loved, at once missionary and educational. But his application had to be refused on grounds of health. He was unusually tall, and had probably outgrown his strength. In any case, his heart was not strong enough for the strain of work abroad, and he turned his thoughts once more to the home-ministry. He received his licence to preach at Sunderland in 1906, and in the same year he went as assistant to Dr. John Watson ("Ian Maclaren")

at Sefton Park Presbyterian Church, Liverpool. Unhappily, this association was broken by Dr. Watson's death in 1907. Aytoun had full charge of the church in the interval that followed before Dr. Watson's successor was appointed. The burden proved too heavy, and early in 1908, there occurred something in the nature of a breakdown, and Aytoun had to look for some work less exhausting nervously than the ministry of a city Church. It was in the Summer of 1908, that a vacancy occurred on the staff at Woodbrooke, and Aytoun was invited to fill it. The post offered to him combined the duties of lecturer and resident tutor at Holland House,—the men's house at Woodbrooke. The acceptance of this invitation paved the way for his marriage, since the residence and the position were suited to a married man. In September, 1908, Robert Aytoun married Dorothy Henderson, of London, and in the autumn, they settled down in the new home and to the new work. From the first they made their home the centre of quiet hospitality and friendship which many generations of Woodbrookers remember it to have been.

Woodbrooke itself made varied calls upon its lecturers. The house and grounds had been placed by Mr. George Cadbury at the disposal of a group of Friends for the purpose of an experiment in religious education. It had been opened in 1903 as a permanent settlement for religious and social study. It was more of a College than a Settlement in the accepted use of the term, and yet it was not an ordinary College, since the students might be of any age from eighteen to eighty, and of either sex, and might stay for any

length of time from a week to a year, and the lecturers were not bound by any examination-syllabus. These characteristics were involved in the nature of the experiment, the aim of which might be described briefly as the strengthening of lay-Christianity. There was then a great variety of need among the students and considerable elasticity in the programme. Under the leadership of Dr. J. Rendel Harris, Woodbrooke, while retaining much of its early delightful freedom, was by this time finding its main lines of study. It was drawing other institutions round it. Kingsmead, the Friends' Foreign Missionary Association Training College, and Westhill, an institution for the training of Sunday School Teachers and the promotion of Sunday School reform, had already been opened, and were sending their students to Woodbrooke, especially for Bible Study. Social studies had received an impetus from the starting of the Social Study Diploma at Birmingham University, and this side of Woodbrooke interests was being pushed forward by the enthusiasm of J. St. George Heath. When Aytoun joined the staff, the requirements of the students were becoming more strictly defined, and it was soon found that his main work would lie in teaching the Old Testament. He gave occasional courses on New Testament subjects and he lectured regularly on early Church History and on Chinese Religions, but the History of Israel and the religion of the prophets were to be his great themes.

Of the influence of Rendel Harris upon Robert Aytoun, it is permissible to say a word or two. Rendel Harris, himself a born teacher, was able at Woodbrooke

to develop teaching gifts in others. He did this even more by example than by counsel. Like other colleagues and disciples of Dr. Harris, Robert Aytoun learnt from him something of the secret of accommodating his pace to men of little knowledge and of interesting at the same time the eager and advanced. He learnt also to mingle humour with theology. It was not a case of imitating the Doctor's methods, but the atmosphere of spiritual freedom and of interest in persons in which the Doctor lived, enabled a responsive Woodbrooke lecturer to find his own liberty and his own best approach to the minds of his students. Aytoun's lectures were marked by great clearness and were delivered somewhat deliberately. He took great pains to avoid misunderstandings and to enable beginners to grasp the true nature of the problems with which they were dealing. He had great sympathy with slow-moving minds, and was endlessly patient. At the same time the more advanced students found him a great inspiration and a mine of knowledge and wisdom. One who was associated with him for years in advanced class-work writes: "What I should like to have said deals with his methods of study: those who attended his lectures heard the result: in the long years of private coaching I have learnt the previous part, the habits of mind, the attitude towards study and the meaning of a scholar's patience and courage and integrity. It is not subject-matter alone he had to teach, but the better part, the subduing of the mind to the demands of Truth." Another advanced student, a minister who did a good deal of work at Woodbrooke while in the

neighbourhood, wrote to Aytoun as follows at the close of a Summer term. "Many thanks for return of papers and for your very kind note. It is so like you to thank me for working with you—still you must know that you have done all the giving and I have week by week taken from your store. It has been such a help to me to meet you and I shall always think of you when I read that great New Testament phrase, 'in the meekness of wisdom.' It is such a joy in working with you to know that you understand the difficulties of a working minister and thus you have been able to look kindly upon my shortcomings." The meekness of wisdom Robert Aytoun possessed in a pre-eminent degree, and this enabled him to appeal both to the simple and the learned.

The letter just quoted emphasises Robert Aytoun's power of sympathy. Naturally his experience at Liverpool fitted him more especially to enter into a minister's difficulties. But there was not a side of Woodbrooke interests which he did not share. It is true that the Quaker atmosphere of Woodbrooke never induced him to abandon his clerical collar and did not destroy his faith in the regular paid ministry. But he had a keen appreciation of the Quaker tradition, nevertheless, and was always concerned for the maintenance and development of Quakerism at, and through Woodbrooke. He joined gladly and helpfully in worship after the manner of Friends, and steadily furthered the aim of Woodbrooke to strengthen the Society. Somewhat similarly, he followed with a lively interest the work of Westhill for the reform of the Sunday School. In at least one course of lectures



each term, he considered especially the needs of Sunday School teachers, and he entered readily into Mr. Archibald's plans for directing the attention of ministers to Sunday School problems. Kingsmead had attracted him from the first since the missionary task of the Church always lay close to his heart. He followed new developments sympathetically. When Fircroft was opened in 1909, as a kind of people's High School, no one welcomed the experiment more gladly. He did not have much direct contact with Fircroft itself, but he was for a number of years President and Leader of the Adult School which met at Fircroft on Sundays. Here his gifts as a teacher were put to good use, and his loyalty to democracy made evident. His adult scholars still remember the thoroughness with which he went with them into their problems intellectual and practical. But perhaps no new development pleased him more than the founding of Carey Hall in 1912. Carey Hall is a College for women missionaries, in which the Baptist Missionary Society, the London Missionary Society and the Women's Missionary Association of the Presbyterian Church of England unite. The new College had a three-fold appeal to him. It was missionary: it was a definite Interdenominational effort: and his own Church, the Presbyterian Church of England, was in it. He acted as chaplain to the College, and served on the Board of Studies and it would be difficult to say how much the new experiment owed to his sympathy and breadth of vision. In 1914, the Aytouns moved from Holland House to a house on the Bristol Road, opposite Woodbrooke, called

“Oaklands,” now the men’s Hostel of Westhill. The move was advantageous as it gave them a more secluded home-life. Their eldest daughter, Elizabeth, was born in 1913 and seventeen months later her sister Joanna arrived. A third daughter, Alison, was born in June, 1918.

The war years necessarily brought new demands and new problems. In 1915 Robert Aytoun was President of the Birmingham and District Free Church Council. The position not only involved special duties, but brought him into contact with many Churches, desiring help in the difficulties of war-time. With several ministers away on service connected with the war, a man like Robert Aytoun found frequent calls among Birmingham pulpits. The same year saw the publication of his book, “The City-centres of Early Christianity,”—a fresh and suggestive survey of the main features of Early Church History, which put in a clear light the local variations in ancient catholicism. Later on, Aytoun gladly took up a special bit of war-work and became Presbyterian Chaplain to the First Southern General Hospital. This proved too exacting. His heart gave warning that he was overtaxing his strength. He had to relinquish the chaplaincy and take things very quietly. As he recovered his health towards the close of the war, he was ready for new tasks. The group of Colleges came through the war, but naturally not without strain. It was clear to the responsible leaders and especially to Mr. Edward Cadbury that the Colleges would need to consolidate their resources by closer co-operation and by sharing their financial burdens. Robert Aytoun,

an intimate friend of Edward Cadbury, shared his views on this matter, and threw himself into the task of putting them into shape. The co-ordination of five practically independent institutions is a delicate matter. To frame a constitution at once acceptable and practical is in itself difficult. To overcome initial obstacles requires great patience and wisdom. Aytoun brought all his mastery of detail, his delight in clearness and definiteness, his tact and sympathy, into play to further the ideal of co-operation between the Selly Oak Colleges. The draft-constitution was his work. He became the first Secretary of the Central Council, and along with H. G. Wood was the first to be appointed to a central chair. He was lecturer on the Old Testament to the group of Colleges. It is not too much to say, that next to the generous and steady support of Edward Cadbury, the Selly Oak Colleges in the first stages of co-ordination owed their largest debt to the loving and wise service of Robert Aytoun.

Aytoun's worth as a scholar did not lack recognition beyond the borders of Selly Oak. The present book is no adequate measure of his attainment or his promise. He was appointed External Examiner in Hebrew at Birmingham University. He continued to examine in Church History, for entrance at his old College, Westminster. He was an active and honoured member of the Old Testament Association. His published papers had begun to attract attention and more was expected of him. But the hopes his friends held regarding his future as a scholar were destined to disappointment. In the spring of 1920, when he



was overdone with a hard term's work, he undertook the one thing that proved too much. He went straight up from Woodbrooke to a Student Movement Bible School held at Ardenconnell, Row, Dumbartonshire. It ran from Monday, March 29th, to Thursday, April 1st. Though he was very tired, the place and the folk stimulated and revived him. His presence was one of the inspiring features of the conference. His lectures went splendidly, and he took more than his share in the after-dinner doings,—a most brave and joyous spirit, as one of the students wrote afterwards. And then as he was coming from this happy conference, the blow fell. He was walking with two men students and they had got about half-way to the station and were just about to go up rather a steep hill when he suddenly said, "Slow down a bit, remember I have a heart," and almost before he had spoken, he had fallen. The students with him were medicals and brought him back carefully to Ardenconnell.

"Mrs. Aytoun arrived on Good Friday morning, April 2nd, and from then onward to Sunday 11th, he lingered, wandering at times, but often conscious and always cheery and uncomplaining, beautiful in his courtesy and thoughtfulness for others, ready even in his weakest moments with some little joke, and anxious, Mrs. Aytoun knew, that none of the happy holiday atmosphere of the house should be spoilt on his or her account.

On Friday 9th, there was a distinct rally and the doctor gave the first ray of hope, but on Saturday he awoke weaker and on Sunday morning at 3.40 he just passed away quietly in his sleep.

The fact that Ardenconnell was a holiday home and that rooms were being occupied that had long been booked by young people for their much needed holidays, made it necessary that the funeral should be as soon as possible.

In spite of the fact that Monday was the Spring holiday, all shops closed and all work suspended, the Ardenconnell gardens yielded their wealth of early Spring blossoms, daffodils, primroses and violets to him, together with some beautiful lilies and other flowers which he loved so much; and that afternoon at 2.30 in the little peaceful hill-side Cemetery of Craigendorran, he was laid to rest very quietly, only two men who had known him in his College days and two from the Bible School who were in the neighbourhood, together with two who had nursed him and one or two others who loved him, being present.

The service was conducted by the Parish Minister and was just what he himself would have wished, short and very simple. The note that ran through it all was the one that above all others, all those who knew him and loved him would have chosen;—praise for his full life of love and his service to the end, and for his final Victory.’’

Robert Aytoun was happy in his death inasmuch as his last days were spent among students and in the work he loved. In this volume we would fain enshrine his memory and continue his work. May it convey to many some of the light which he saw so clearly in the pages of Scripture, and some of the inspiration by which he lived and to which he was so splendidly true.

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### A.—THE AIM OF THE BOOK.

The study of the record of the revelation and perception of God in the Old Testament leads one to the conviction that herein lay one of the most important elements in the preparation for the coming of Jesus Christ. The fact emerges in this study that many fore-runners, most of whom, it may be, knew nothing about His coming, were yet leading up to Him and making ready for Him and for those things for which He stood.

All who caught a glimpse of God, especially such as caught a new glimpse, all who received even some dim impression of His true character and passed it on, all who were able to realise, even though partially and imperfectly, something of the Divine intentions for men, all who endeavoured to make themselves and their fellows responsive to the Divine Will and to make the Rule of God, as they knew it, supreme in the life of their nations and of its individual members,—all these, and many more of kindred endeavour and accomplishment, were pioneer workers and travellers on the great Road to God, which Jesus completed, which

culminated in him,—that [Road along which now a wayfaring man, though but unskilled and unlearned, may walk without danger of going astray.

The Old Testament is full of the record of such pioneers and explorers into the fact of God, men who saw in part what Jesus saw as a whole, who guessed what Jesus knew, who perceived dimly what He saw clearly.

Modern Biblical scholarship has made it evident that the revelation granted to these men, and still more their perception of that revelation, was for the most part a gradual evolutionary process. It has shown that there were many fluctuations and retrogressive tendencies (which had to be overcome), tendencies embodied in not a little of the Old Testament literature itself. But it has further made it clear that in spite of these backward movements the Old Testament writings, when dated according to the canons of literary and historical science, show signs of a slow but sure advance toward the fulness of our Lord's revealing knowledge of the heart and mind of God.

The purpose of the following studies is to present some of the more important features in the Old Testament view of God in such a way as to exhibit, in their historic setting and development, the principal stages in this progressive revelation and gradual perception of the Most High, which culminated in that perfect revelation of God in Him who alone was able truly to say "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father."

## B.—STATEMENT AS TO CRITICAL VIEWS ASSUMED.

I. *The Growth of Old Testament Literature.*

The study of the Growth of the Knowledge of God as evidenced in the pages of the Old Testament is dependent on the kindred and preliminary study of the canon and composition of the books of the Old Testament. All valid Old Testament theology must be based on sound literary criticism. As these chapters are an attempt to set forth the development and progress of certain aspects of religious conceptions and perceptions, it is important that the reader should keep before him the relative order and chronology of the Old Testament books and their several sources. For the convenience of the general reader who has not necessarily these literary and chronological details in the forefront of his mind, we may outline the general critical position here assumed. Unless otherwise stated in any particular passage, it is that held by most conservative modern scholars, whose standpoint is characteristic of such a work as Hastings' *Bible Dictionary*.

It is assumed that the first six books, Genesis to Joshua, were originally one book which in its turn was made up of a harmony of four principal documents. These documents are commonly known as the Jehovistic or Jahvistic, the Elohistic, the Deuteronomic and the Priestly, which last includes what is usually called the Holiness Code. They are referred to respectively as J, E, D, P (and H).

The Jehovistic and Elohistic documents (J and E) are held to have taken shape in the century before Amos



the first of the literary prophets ; the Deuteronomic document (D) shortly after Isaiah and most of it before the reformation under Josiah 621 B.C. ; the Holiness Code (H) during the early Exile (after 586 B.C.) and the Priestly Code and Document partly during the Exile, but not to have assumed its final shape until about the time of Ezra (? 444 B.C.).

Isaiah, chapters xl. onwards, otherwise known as Second or Deutero-Isaiah, is taken as in the main belonging to the close of the Exile or probably rather later.

Daniel is held to have been written during the Persecution in the time of Antiochus Epiaphanes (about 168 B.C.) ; Zechariah ix. onwards about the same period ; while the Psalter is presumed to contain Psalms ranging in date from about 1,000 B.C., to about 150 B.C.

It is further taken for granted that there are Exilic and Post-exilic passages to be found incorporated in some of the Pre-exilic writings, more particularly in Isaiah i.-xxxix.

The following tables give the relative order and approximate dates of the more important of the inspired writings together with the dates of a few of the epoch-making events in the history of the Hebrew people.

Some such list of dates, etc., is indispensable for the proper appreciation and understanding of the subject in hand.

## 2. *Approximate Order and Chronology of the Old Testament Scriptures.*

PRE-EXILIC	The Jehovistic and Elohist Documents (J & E) Between David and Amos the first literary prophet.	
	Amos Hosea	} Prophets of North Israel; prophesied in the years before the Fall of North Israel in 721 B.C.
	Isaiah (I-39) Micah	} Prophets of Judah; prophesied shortly before and for sometime after the Fall of North Israel in 721 B.C.
	The Deuteronomic Document (D)	Imbued with the teaching of Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, etc. Written after these prophets but before Josiah's Reformation 621 B.C.
	Nahum Zephaniah Habakkuk	} Later part of the seventh century.
EXILIC	Jeremiah	Prophesied during the last quarter of the seventh century and up to and after the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar 586 B.C.
	Ezekiel	Prophesied from first Exile of the Judean (597) onwards.
	The Holiness Code (H). Lev. 17-26. Written and compiled in Ezekiel's time.	
	Judges Samuel Kings	} Compiled and partly written during the Exile, but embodying much material of earlier date. During the Exile many other earlier books, e.g., Deuteronomy and the Pre-exilic prophets were edited and added to.
	The Priestly Document (P). Written and compiled during (?) and after the Exile.	

Haggai } Prophesied at close of the Exile, 520 B.C.  
 Zechariah (1-8) } onwards.

Isaiah (40-end) } Second Isaiah written. A little is  
 probably earlier than Haggai-Zechariah,  
 some perhaps as late as Malachi.

Obadiah(?) } Written shortly before the coming of  
 Malachi } Nehemiah 444 B.C.

Nehemiah's Memoirs. Written about 444 B.C.

The Priestly Document (P) in its final form about 400 B.C.

Joel written between 444 B.C., and 333 B.C.

Chronicles } written sometime subsequent to Nehemiah's  
 Ezra } Governorship.  
 Nehemiah }

Job } written some time during the Greek Period  
 Jonah } 333-168 B.C.  
 Ecclesiastes }

Daniel } Written in the late Greek-Syrian  
 Zechariah (ix.-end) } Period, about 168 B.C.

Proverbs } probably cover the whole of the period from  
 and } the Early Monarchy to the Maccabean  
 Psalms } Period (about 150 B.C.).

### 3. *Approximate dates of Epoch-making Events in Hebrew History.*

?1400-1200 B.C.	The Exodus.
about 1000 B.C.	David.
about 850 B.C.	Elijah and Elisha.
721 B.C.	Fall of North Israel.
606 B.C.	Fall of Nineveh and of the Assyrian Empire.
597 B.C.	First Exile of Judah.
586 B.C.	Second Exile of Judah, and Destruction of Jerusalem.
538 B.C.	Advent of Cyrus and Fall of Babylonian Empire.
521-520 B.C.	Re-building of the Temple.



- |          |  |
|----------|--|
| 444 B.C. | Re-building of the Walls of Jerusalem<br>by Nehemiah.  |
| 333 B.C. | Advent of Alexander the Great and<br>Fall of Persian Empire.   |
| 168 B.C. | { Desecration of Temple by Antiochus<br>Epiphanes.<br>Maccabean Uprising.<br>First step towards Jewish Independence. |

## CHAPTER II

### PRIMITIVE ERRONEOUS CONCEPTIONS OF GOD —THEIR TRACES IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

#### A.—CRUDE CONCEPTIONS IN THEIR PROPER PERSPECTIVE.

The conceptions of God found in the Old Testament are far from being on the same level. Not seldom God is portrayed there as being very different in character and person from the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. To such an extent is this the case that some of the early Christians, *e.g.*, Marcion, one of the arch-heretics of the second century A.D., believed that the God of the Old Testament was actually a different person from the God of the New Testament. But although one finds a considerable number of such differences it is important to note that in most cases the conceptions of God which we now, in the light of the New Testament, recognise to be either unworthy or inadequate, are gradually displaced in the Old Testament records themselves by truer and fuller views of Him. We can trace the "knowledge" of Him growing from "more to more," the old unworthy notions being left behind in the light of new experience

and revelation of Him. We may note further that this change is not in God Himself. The God of the old dispensation is exactly the same as the God of the New. The God who "so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son" loved the world and every person in it in the days of the conquest of Canaan, when He is portrayed as seemingly vindictive and cruel, just as much as He did in the days of Jesus. What was imperfect was not God's character, but the realisation of it, to which the writers of parts, at least, of the Old Testament had attained. They were men like ourselves; they saw God; but their vision of Him was somewhat distorted. A perfect mirror is needed before a perfect face can be reflected perfectly. A perfect soul was needed before God could be reflected perfectly, and that was one great reason why Jesus came. Then they saw in a glass darkly,—they saw in a mirror that was dimmed and flawed,—but now in Jesus we can see, as it were, face to face.

It should be observed that of that which must be entirely repudiated in the Old Testament conception of God there is remarkably little. Even of crude and primitive ideas with regard to His nature there is not so much as might have been expected, and the actual writers and compilers of the Old Testament rarely build on these, even when in some cases they seem to share them.

These crude ideas, where they are found, are almost always such as were held by the other nations of antiquity. They are often in themselves an advance on still cruder beliefs and customs, and as such seem sometimes to have been the result of God's revelation to

those who were feeling after Him if haply they might find Him. But their chief interest for us is that a study of them helps us to realise how far men had yet to go before they arrived at anything like an adequate view of God, and provides us with a starting-point for the progress in the revelation of Him indicated in the Old Testament.

## B.—LIMITED CONCEPTIONS OF JAHVEH.

It has been clearly demonstrated, that the religion of the early Hebrews had much in common with that of other Semitic tribes of the Desert. Not only the outward forms of religion and worship, but the underlying beliefs were sometimes closely akin. It seems likely that most of these were inherited by the Hebrews from their ancestors, and some, perhaps, acquired or revived through the contact of the Israelites (during the long years between the Exodus and the Conquest, when the desert was their home) with the Midianite tribes, with whom Moses, and later his people, were brought into close and friendly relations.

### 1. *Jahveh as Tribal.*

Among the Semites within each desert tribe there was as a rule but one tribal god, who was bound up with his people's existence, and who was their lord and head and the champion of their interests. The tribe was under the protection of this god, who was sometimes conceived of as the Blood-Kinsman of the Tribe. This kinship with the god was renewed from time to time by a covenant of blood, a species of sacrifice, wherein the

god and the members of the tribe shared in the life-blood of an especially holy victim.

The Covenant at Sinai between Jahveh and the Israelites appears to have been an occasion of like significance. It is possible that it also had the effect of creating or reviving a kind of blood relationship between the various tribes of Israel, and that it served to weld them into one nation.

The tribal god was thought of as accompanying the tribe and bound to no particular spot, just as the wandering tribe had no settled abiding place ; but even then some one locality was believed to be especially sacred to him, and he was conceived of as having as his headquarters some awe-inspiring region such as a lofty mountain with gloomy gorges and mysterious heights.

Similar beliefs with regard to Jahveh obtained among the people of Israel. The presence of Jahveh was likewise thought of as accompanying the Hebrews in their nomadic journeyings through the desert during the long period between their escape from Egypt and their conquest of Canaan.

The idea of Jahveh's having special headquarters in the desert likewise continued for many centuries after their settlement in Canaan. Sinai (Horeb) was thought to be Jahveh's particular abode, the place where He might normally be found. It was there that He manifested Himself to Moses, and it was there that the Israelites had to come for their covenant with Him or, rather, His with them.

In the time of the Judges, in the Song of Deborah, Jahveh was still conceived of as coming thence to the help of the tribes of Israel in Canaan.

Jahveh, when thou wentest forth from Seir,\*  
 When thou marchdest out of the field of Edom,  
 The mountains dropped down at the presence of Jahveh,  
 Even yon Sinai at the presence of Jahveh the God of  
 Israel.

(Judges v. 4, 5.)†

Much later, in the account of Elijah's flight from Jezebel we find that Horeb was still looked upon as the "Mount of God." Elijah evidently travelled there of set purpose because it was the seat of Jahveh. And there, according to the narrative, Jahveh was manifested to the prophet in a very special fashion.

## 2. *Jahveh as Territorial.*

After the settlement of the Hebrews in Palestine *territorial* ideas, religious and otherwise, gradually took the place of *tribal*, as they put aside their nomad habits and settled down as an agricultural people. The Canaanites, into whose land they had come, and the other settled Semites in the various little kingdoms and states of Palestine thought of their deities primarily as agricultural gods. These were accounted the source of the fertility of the several districts where they dwelt. The god was the baal, the lord or husband of the land. He was worshipped by the inhabitants of a district as the lord and fertiliser of that district. If people moved from one district to another they were thought to leave the sphere of influence of the baal of the old district, and they naturally transferred their allegiance to the god of the new district to which they came. Contact with

\* According to the evidence of several passages in the Old Testament Sinai (Horeb) was situated among the mountains of Seir.

† Cf. also Deut. xxxiii. 2 ; Ps. lxxviii. 7 ; Hab. iii. 3.



these influences in time tended to make the Israelites look upon Jahveh as in some sort an agricultural god and a nature-god. It ultimately led some of them to the discovery that He was the God of nature. It also had the effect of making them think of Him as Lord of their land. Israelite territory was conceived of as His possession, while the territory beyond the boundaries of their State was considered as not in His domain,—much in the same way that a king is king over his own land but is only a king by courtesy outside of his own kingdom; his rule does not extend beyond his own land, and his subjects if they are in other lands must normally accept the rule of the kings in whose countries they may be.

Consequently it came to be thought that Jahveh could be worshipped only on His own land. There is a curious and extreme instance of such a belief in the case of Naaman the Syrian, who desired to worship Jahveh when he returned to his own home which was far away from Jahveh's land. In order to circumvent the difficulty, Naaman asked Elisha for two loads of Israelitish soil, thinking that, as this was a portion of Jahveh's land, worship upon it must be efficacious (2 Kings v. 17). A more typical example is that of David, who evidently took it for granted that exile from Jahveh's land meant exile from Jahveh, and the necessity of worshipping the god of the country to which he was driven.

Cursed be they before Jahveh, he said, for they have driven me out this day that I should not cleave unto the inheritance of Jahveh, saying, Go, serve other gods. Now, therefore, let not my blood fall to the earth away from the presence of Jahveh (1 Sam. xxvi. 19, 20).

This narrow, territorial view of Jahveh was normal right up to the exile, and added to the troubles of Judæans who were then banished from their native land. It was only their experience of God during the exile itself which enabled the people as a whole to break away from this limitation in their idea of God.

We find then the conception of Jahveh (1) as limited to the tribe and identified with its interests; (2) as limited to the country of His people.

### 3. *Jahveh Enthroned in the Heavens.*

There is one other conception which must be mentioned in this connection. These limitations, more particularly the latter, were not altogether essential. Among the Canaanites the baal tended to be identified with his land. Jahveh, however, was thought of not only as dwelling in His land but also as *having His abode in the heavens*, the heavens being of course the firmament. *Jacob's ladder, on which the angels of God ascended and descended, reached from earth to heaven* (Gen. xxviii. 12). The angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven (Gen. xxi. 17). Jahveh is called the God of heaven (Gen. xxiv. 7) by Abraham when speaking to his servant. It is possible that the seventh and eighth century narrators of these stories may be responsible for this thought with regard to Jahveh's dwelling-place. The expressions are, however, fairly common, and though the thought may not be primitive and may not have been widely recognised, yet it seems to be no novelty in the Genesis-stories. *The xviii. Psalm, which is probably older than the present form of the*



Genesis stories, has this same thought of Jahveh in Heaven very powerfully expressed.

He bowed the Heavens also and came down :

And thick darkness was under his feet.

And he rode upon a cherub and did fly :

Yea, he flew swiftly on the wings of the wind.

. . . Jahveh also thundered in the Heavens.

(Ps. xviii. 9, 10, 13.)

The thought, it is true, was probably, in part at least, derived from what seems to have been a very primitive idea that Jahveh was the storm-God (see below p. 30 f.). However that may be, and however crude the beginnings of the idea were, it helped in time to enlarge and exalt the conceptions of Jahveh.

## CHAPTER III

### PRIMITIVE ERRONEOUS CONCEPTIONS OF GOD (Continued)

#### A.—MATERIALISTIC CONCEPTIONS OF THE NATURE OF JAHVEH.

##### 1. *Anthropomorphic Ideas.*

There can be little doubt that Jahveh was at first conceived of in a very materialistic way as a vast, powerful and normally invisible being, very much like a human being.

Hands and feet, eyes, nose, ears, face, etc., are constantly ascribed to Him, while He is referred to as riding, flying, walking, hearing, speaking and even eating and smelling. That these expressions were not in every case mere anthropomorphisms but were often intended literally, is most clearly seen in the matter of sacrifices. Sacrifices were originally looked upon as food for the god to whom they were offered. As a rule the worshippers took their share of this food; sometimes it was completely given over to the god.

##### 2. *Gross Ideas related to Sacrifice.*

The blood and the fat were especially reserved for the god, except on the occasion of some particularly

solemn communion sacrifice, when the worshippers also partook of the blood. In the Old Testament at such special sacrifices the worshippers were sprinkled with the blood instead of actually partaking of it. In the directions for the conduct of sacrifice in the Old Testament the blood is always forbidden to the worshippers. Their share, when they have any, is the flesh. The blood belonged to Jahveh alone. The fat also was appropriated to Jahveh.

The priest shall burn them [*i.e.* various portions of internal fat] upon the altar, it is the *food* of the offering made by fire for a sweet savour; all the fat is Jahveh's. It shall be a perpetual statute throughout your generations, in all your dwellings, that ye eat neither fat nor blood (Lev. iii. 16, 17).

The fat was the food, the blood apparently the drink of Jahveh. The blood was conveyed to the Deity by being poured out, and the fat, as a rule, by being burnt. I have little doubt that the practice of burning tallow candles in worship originated in some such way as this, and that it is a survival of ancient sacrificial customs based on the extremely crude notion that food could thus be conveyed to the deity !

References to sacrifices, which show that they were intended as food and drink for the deity, are common enough in the Old Testament. Later teachers frequently spoke against them, *e.g.*

I am full of the burnt offerings of rams and the *fat* of fed beasts, and I delight not in the *blood* of bullocks, etc.

(Is. i. 11.)

Will I, [says Jahveh] eat the flesh of bulls or *drink the blood* of goats?

(Ps. l. 13.)

And again, with reference to other gods,

He shall say, where are their gods, . . .  
Which did *eat the fat* of their sacrifices,  
And drank the wine of their drink-offerings?

(Deut. xxxii. 37.)

The *smell* of burnt-offerings was also believed to be most acceptable to the Deity. The old idea was that not only was this smell pleasing, but that the burnt sacrifice actually reached the Deity as food "in the form of the fragrant fire-distilled essence." When Noah made a sacrifice of burnt-offerings after the flood, the record says that Jahveh *smelled* the sweet savour (Gen. viii. 21). There can be little doubt that this was originally meant to be taken literally, and one is reminded by it of the still cruder phrase of the Babylonian Flood-story, "The gods smelt the sweet savour. The gods gathered like flies over the sacrifice." In the ancient poem called the "Blessing of Moses," the same thing is expressed even more plainly.

They [the Levites] teach Jacob thy judgments,  
And Israel thy law:  
They bring to Thy nostrils the savour of sacrifice,  
And whole burnt-offerings to Thine altar.

(Deut. xxxiii. 10.)

### 3. *Images of Jahveh.*

This material and corporeal conception of Jahveh is further exemplified by the fact that until as late as the eighth century B.C. images of Jahveh were in vogue, and were apparently looked upon as unobjectionable.

There are numerous indications that these had their recognised place in the life and worship of the Hebrews. With the possible exception of Exodus xx. 4, there is no

sign that they were looked upon as out of accord with Jahveh-worship until the time of Hosea and onwards, when it was realised what a danger they were to true religion. We cite a few examples. (a) The graven image of Micah the Ephraimite was evidently an image of Jahveh, as it was made of silver and dedicated to Jahveh (Judges xvii. 3). There is no suggestion in the story that the making or setting up of the image was reprehensible—rather the contrary. (b) The *Ephod* constructed by Gideon with the gold taken from the spoil of the Midianites (Judges viii. 27) was an image, and Gideon, it must be remembered, was the foremost champion of Jahveh of his age, and had actually endangered his life by destroying the accessories of alien worship. His historian, it is true, adds a word of censure, but his was the standpoint of the century after Hosea. (c) The *teraphim*\* was an image of some kind, not necessarily of Jahveh. It is recorded of David that he kept a *teraphim* in his house (1 Sam. xix. 13). It is hardly likely that so zealous a worshipper of Jahveh as David would have in his house the image of any other god than Jahveh.

Various phrases which occur also suggest the use of outward representations of Jahveh *e.g.*, "Three times in the year let all thy males see the face of [R.V. wrongly 'appear before'] Jahveh" (Ex. xxxiv. 23). The phrase "see the face of" cannot be altogether figurative in this connection and almost certainly points to the presence of some kind of image of Jahveh in the sanctuary, which was shown from time to time. The phrase

\* The plural form is probably a plural of majesty, like Elohim, which is translated "God."

"bring him unto God." "come near unto God," etc., in Ex. xxi. 6; xxii. 8 and 9 [where "God" is unjustifiably rendered "the Judges" in the A.V. and R.V. Margin] are best explained in somewhat the same way.

#### 4. *The meaning of the name Jahveh.\**

If we could be certain as to the meaning of the name Jahveh, we might be able to understand better the primitive conceptions of His nature. And perhaps the reader ought to be reminded again that it would not really matter how crude those might be proved to have been; for whatever crudities there may have been, they

\* There are other names used for Jahveh, but the meaning of them is for the most part so obscure that they throw but little light on the early ideas held with regard to Him.

The names are as follows:—

(1) "*El*" "*Elohim*" "*Eloah*" each of which is translated as God, and expresses in general the conception of Deity.

(a) *El*: commonly used in this or similar form among most of the Semitic people as a designation for gods in general. The most likely derivation for the word is from a root signifying "strength," or "might." Another derivation suggested is from a root 'ûl (found in Arabic) which would give the word the sense of "*Leader*." And again it has been thought to be connected with the Hebrew preposition ʾel = unto, which would make the word imply something like the "*Ultimate*," but this is far fetched.

(b) *Elohim* which is the plural of *Eloah*. The plural is almost certainly a plural of majesty. The derivation is even more obscure than that of *El*. It may possibly be the same.

(2) "*El Shaddai*" and "*Elyon*." These are rather descriptive titles than designations proper.

(a) *El Shaddai* (A.V. "God Almighty") meanings conjectured are (i.) "(all) sufficient"; (ii.) as connected with Hebrew shēd = demon; (iii.) "Raingiver" as if derived from Heb. shadah = to pour forth; (iv.) "The destroyer" as if derived from Heb. shadah shadad, to destroy; (v.) as connected with Assy. shadu, a high mountain. The two latter are the most plausible.

(b) "*Elyon*," "Most High." The same expression is used of monarchs. Whether originally the word ever implied a "sky" god, it is impossible to say.



were gradually shed as the true nature of the Deity became more fully realised. Erroneous ideas in the beginnings of a religion only matter in so far as there is a tendency to return to them or a reluctance to break away from them altogether.

There are various derivations suggested for the name Jahveh. The "I am that I am," or, as it ought to be rendered, "I will be what I will be" of Ex. iii. 14, would derive the word from the Hebrew *Hayah* to be, or rather from an archaic (and obsolete) form of it (*havah*). There are, however, considerable etymological difficulties in the way of accepting this derivation. Although probably etymologically incorrect, it shows the meaning ultimately attached to the name by the Hebrews.\* As science it is wrong, as theology it is right. Taken in this way Jahveh would mean "he will be" or perhaps "he will be what he will be." The expression does not refer to His essential nature, but to what He will approve Himself to others and to what He will show Himself to be to those in covenant with Him. What exactly He will be is not definitely stated, but it is implied in the context. He will prove Himself to be a Covenant-keeping God, and there is a hint of the "same yesterday, to-day and forever." That there are unexplored possibilities in Israel's God may also legitimately be read into the explanation of the name. Such an explanation would indeed be a revelation whensoever and to whomsoever it came; the correct derivation has no religious value beside it.

\* The document E. in which the explanation of the name occurs has a good many faulty but instructive and suggestive derivations of names in it.



Other derivations are somewhat more probable etymologically, though they are for the most part mutually exclusive. Among these are the following :\*

The Creator—lit. he will cause to be (as if from *hayah* or *havah*, to be—the form *yahveh* [*Jahveh*] is causative).

The giver of life—lit. he will cause to live (as if from *hayah* to live).

The Blower—lit. he will blow (connecting the root with the Arab *havva*, to blow).

The Falling One—lit. he will fall (from *hava* or *havah*, a Heb. hapax legomenon meaning fall).

The Feller—lit. he will cause to fall (the causative of the same word).

## 5. *Jahveh—a Storm-God?*

The three last derivations all point to *Jahveh* having been originally conceived of as a storm-god. The "Blower" would be the hurricane, the "Falling One" would be the thunderbolt, and the "Feller" the lightning. If any one of them be correct, and they are by no means impossible, its significance fits in with the fact that *Jahveh*, especially in his theophanies, is closely associated with the thunder and lightning.† The

\* For fuller discussion of these, see Kautzsch, *Religion of Israel*, II., ii. 1, 2.

† Cf. Ex. xix. 16-19; xx. 18; Judges v. 4, 5; 1 Sam. ii. 10; vii. 10; 1 Kings xix. 11; Ps. xviii. 8-14; also the voice of *Jahveh*=thunder. Note also the reference to thunder in John xii. 28, 30.

special association of Jahveh with thunder lingered long after the idea had been outgrown.

It has been plausibly conjectured in this connection that the two tables of stone in the ark were originally meteoric stones—thunder-stones, and that these as having fallen from heaven were looked upon as especially sacred, perhaps even as abiding places of the thunder-god.\* It is a curious and significant fact that such stones were called by the Greeks *baitulia*, which is simply a modified transliteration of the Semitic *bait(h)el*, *i.e.* Bethel, abode of God.

### 6. *The Significance of the Ark.*

If this were the case, it is easy to understand why the ark, which in itself was merely a box or portable receptacle of some sort, was regarded with so much awe, and why the ark was, even in historic times, practically identified with Jahveh. Thus

When the ark set forward, Moses said, Rise up, Jahveh, and let thine enemies be scattered, and let them that hate thee flee before thee. And when it rested he said, Return, Jahveh, unto the ten thousands of the thousands of Israel (Num. x. 35-36 [J]).

Similarly, when David and the people danced before the ark it is spoken of as dancing before Jahveh (2 Sam. vi. 12-14, etc.; Cf. also Num. xiv. 42; Josh. iv. 11-13; 1 Sam. iv. 6; 1 Sam. vi. 1-11). The presence of the ark meant the presence of Jahveh, and its absence meant His absence. The ark was certainly treated in

\* There is no evidence in J or E that it was the tablets of the Covenant laws which were placed in the ark. The statement that this was so was Deuteronomic and later.

these early days as far more than a symbol of these things.\*

### 7. *Jahveh—God of Battles.*

The ark is constantly connected with the battles of the Israelites. Its presence was held to ensure victory and its absence defeat. (Cf. Num. xiv. 42-45; Josh. vi. 1-11; 1 Sam. iv. 1-7; 2 Sam. xi. 11; xv. 24.) There is no doubt that Jahveh was until comparatively late times looked upon as a God of battles, and that this was considered one of His most important and characteristic functions. "Jahveh is a man of war" says one of Israel's oldest poems (Ex. xv. 3). "Jahveh teacheth my hands to war," says the Psalmist in the xviii. Psalm (verse 34). What is perhaps the oldest Hebrew book, quotations from which occur in JE, is called "The Book of the Wars of Jahveh" (Num. xxi. 14). The wars in which Israel was engaged were nearly always Jahveh's wars in which He "fought for Israel" (Josh. x. 14). All the Israelities who were taking part in a war were looked upon as taking part in a religious function, and had to abstain from all religious defilement.† The prisoners and the spoil were frequently treated as sacred to Jahveh and looked upon as of the nature of sacrifices or offerings (Judges i. 17; 1 Sam. xv. ; Micah iv. 13). The favourite name for Jahveh in this connection was Jahveh God of Hosts or, more shortly, Jahveh of Hosts

\* In "prophetic" times, as the conception of Jahveh became more and more spiritual, the religious importance of the ark waned, till in Jer. iii. 16, the ignoring and forgetting the ark is included as one of the marks of a hoped-for spiritual revival.

† See W. Robertson Smith, *Religion of the Semites*, ed. 2, pp. 402, 455f.

(Jahveh seba'oth, or, as we have it in the English New Testament, Lord of Sabaoth, Rom. ix. 29). The hosts were battle-hosts, the armies of Israel, though this did not necessarily exclude hosts of angelic warriors. In later times, when the idea of Jahveh became more exalted, and the warrior conception receded into the background, hosts came to refer exclusively to Heavenly Hosts, angelic hosts, and perhaps also the "hosts of heaven," sun, moon, and stars.\*

## B.—DISTORTED CONCEPTIONS OF THE CHARACTER OF JAHVEH.

It is in connection with Jahveh as a God of War that we find serious misconceptions of Jahveh's real character, which have persisted for many ages and have even reappeared from time to time in Christian theology, though of course greatly modified and disguised, but which are entirely absent from Jesus' revelation of the Father. These were, however, no worse—perhaps better—than those held by other nations at the same period with regard to their gods, while in Israel, as we shall see, the process of displacement of such ideas by worthier thoughts of Jahveh began very early.

### I. *Jahveh Antagonistic to Foes of Israel.*

As God of Hosts it was natural that Jahveh should be thought of as *antagonistic to all the enemies* of Israel

\* The phrase "Lord of Hosts" is rarely if ever used in the Hexateuch and Judges. It is probable that the expression was either excluded or removed, lest there should be confusion with the worship of the "hosts of heaven," which was a dangerous temptation to the Hebrews especially in the time of the Deuteronomic editors but also earlier.

and that He should war against them and destroy them. "I, Jahveh, will be an enemy unto thy enemies and an adversary unto thy adversaries" (Ex. xxiii. 22), represents the normal and for long universal belief with regard to Jahveh (cf. also Josh. xi. 20).

## 2. *Jahveh Vindictive.*

His attitude to certain of Israel's foes is further represented as *vindictive*. In the case of the Amalekites, for instance, because they opposed Israel in the wilderness, Jahveh was believed to have set up a solemn blood-feud against this people, which was not to cease until they had been blotted out of existence.

Jahveh said. . . . I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. . . . Jahveh hath sworn. Jahveh will have war with Amalek from generation to generation (Ex. xvii. 14, 16).

## 3. *Jahveh Ruthless.*

Worse even than that is the *ruthlessness* displayed in the commands attributed to Jahveh with regard to these same Amalekites, and also to the Canaanites and others. Massacre of the most thorough and pitiless kind is not only enjoined but insisted on as a sacred duty, the neglect of which Jahveh will punish severely.

Thus saith Jahveh of Hosts: Go smite Amalek and utterly destroy all that they have and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling.

(1 Sam. xv. 3.)

It is not necessary to multiply instances showing the blood-thirsty pitilessness to those outside the narrow limits of the nation of Israel generally



attributed to Jahveh. The same kind of estimate of Jahveh's character may also be seen in such incidents as the hanging of Saul's seven sons "before Jahveh" in order to propitiate Him, and so deliver Israel from the famine which came on the land year after year. "And after that God was entreated for the land" (2 Sam. xxi. 1-14). We may compare the curious story of the two bears who tore forty-two lads because they had mocked Elisha, Jahveh's prophet (2 Kings ii. 23).

#### 4. *Jahveh Dangerous.*

Finally we may notice the somewhat kindred idea that Jahveh was a dangerous being with whom it was not safe to come into too close contact, and whom it was perilous to approach unless proper precautions were taken and certain regulations observed, an idea which is common enough in many other forms of primitive religion. One or two passages may be adduced to illustrate the presence of this belief among the Israelites. At Sinai, those who came too near risked death.

Charge the people lest they break through unto Jahveh to gaze and many of them perish. . . . and let the priests also . . . sanctify themselves lest Jahveh break forth upon them (Ex. xix. 21, 22).

Then much later, when David was having the ark conveyed to Jerusalem, the narrator tells us how Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen stumbled, and the anger of Jahveh was kindled against Uzzah, and God smote him for his rashness (2 Sam. vi. 7). Whatever may be the real explanation of this incident, it is clear enough how it was regarded (cf. also 1 Sam. vi. 19, 20, etc.).

Such views of Jahveh are not a subject on which one cares to dwell, and too much stress on them gives a wrong idea of the representation of God in the Old Testament as a whole. Yet they must not be overlooked nor glossed over, lest we fail to realise the advance in some of the later prophets and Psalmists or to appreciate the difference Christ has made.



## CHAPTER IV

### HIGHER PRE-PROPHETIC CONCEPTIONS OF GOD

In the previous chapters we have set forth the more primitive ideas with regard to the Deity which were held by the Hebrews. In this chapter we have to investigate not the lower but the higher elements in the conception of God which was to be found even before the earliest literary prophets, Amos, Hosea and Isaiah. These are best seen in the religious standpoint of those who wrote and compiled the Hexateuch documents generally known as J. and E.\* But as these documents often embody earlier views of God and of religion in general than those actually held by the writers themselves, it is sometimes possible to trace in them a gradual process of growth from the lower to the higher. Generally speaking they have remoulded the ancient stories and traditions to make them a suitable vehicle for passing on the fuller and truer revelation of God's nature and character that had come to themselves ; but sometimes as we have already

\* J. — the Jahvistic document, emanated from Judah and probably belongs to the ninth century B.C. E. — the Elohist document emanated from N. Israel (Ephraim) and probably belongs to the eighth century B.C. J. and E. are to be found intertwined with P. (the Priestly Document) in the narrative portions of Genesis, Exodus and Numbers ; and with both D. (the Deuteronomic Document) and P. in Joshua.

seen the original narratives with their primitive point of view have been preserved by them almost intact.

The most important features in the conception of God found in JE are the following :—

- (1) Advance from polytheism to monolatry.
- (2) Belief in the personality of God.
- (3) Gradual apprehension of the Spirituality of God.
- (4) Belief in the moral nature of God and growing insight into His character.

#### A.—ADVANCE FROM POLYTHEISM TO MONOLATRY.

There are one or two possible traces of an earlier polytheism in JE, such as the phrase in Gen. iii. 22 man is become as *one of us*. But even if this expression was originally polytheistic, it is an exception which proves the rule, for practically all other traces of polytheism have been carefully expunged from such of the stories incorporated in JE as may have been tinged by it. The story of the Flood is a case in point. The Babylonish versions of it, one of which at least, is much older than J's version, are polytheistic throughout (cf. *e.g.* above p. 26). In J. the story is carefully purged from any such taint.

Elohim the usual Hebrew word for God is, it is true, a plural form, but as used in the Old Testament has nothing to do with polytheism. It is merely a plural of majesty\* similar to our regal "we," and except where it refers to heathen gods, it always takes a singular verb. But although the writers of J. and E. are certainly not

\* Cf. p. 27 n.

polytheists, even in their language they are not yet properly monotheistic.

They were monolatrists,—that is to say, they worshipped but one God. They did not categorically deny the existence of other gods, even while they refused to worship them. Other gods hardly came within the scope of JE, but in the history of Israel after the settlement in Canaan it is quite evident that the gods of other nations and lands were recognised by the Hebrews as having a real and sometimes effective existence. Jephthah, in Judges xi. 24, speaks as if the god Chemosh had a real existence.

So now Jahveh, the God of Israel, hath dispossessed the Amorites from before His people, and shouldest thou possess them? Wilt not thou possess that which Chemosh thy god giveth thee to possess?

Again, in 2 Kings iii. 27, when Mesha the sheep king of Moab sacrificed his eldest son on the wall of his besieged city, the "great wrath," which the historian says came on Israel can be none other than the wrath of the god of the land, whom by this most efficacious offering Mesha had at last moved to action against the invaders of the land (cf. also David's language in 1 Sam. xxvi. 19).

Professor A. C. Welch says of the writers of J. and E. "They have no theory of the divine unity, but they are worshippers of one God. That the other nations acknowledge other gods is of course known to them; but what these gods may be in themselves or whether they have any real existence, is of no real importance."\* Jahveh was to them the only God who was of any real account. The God who in their narratives came into

\* *The Religion of Israel under the Kingdom*, p. 8.

contact with men, and for the matter of that with the universe, was always for them one and the same person.

The God who walked with Adam, the God who saved Noah, the God who spoke to Abraham in Ur of the Chaldees, the God who sent dreams to Pharaoh in Egypt, the God who delivered Israel from Egypt, was one and the same God.

Renan has said that the Semite was a born monotheist. This is true to the extent that the tendency of the desert Semites was in the direction of the worship of a single God. Within each tribe, as we have seen, there was often but one tribal God. The bare monotony of the desert with its sense of isolation and simplicity is no encouragement to the multiplication of gods and goddesses. It may well be that it was in and through the desert that the Israelites began to learn the lesson of loyalty to one God to the exclusion of others. But Canaan, the land into which the Israelites came, was a very hotbed of polytheism, and that of the most degrading type. As Principal G. A. Smith says,—“the rich soil of the land with its luxuriant vegetation drew away the Semitic tribes who settled there from the austerity of their desert faith, and turned them into polytheists of the rankest kind. The natural fertility of Syria . . . intoxicated her immigrants with nature-worship.”\* The marvel of the story is that this land of all others with its supremely polytheistic tendencies should have been the cradle of monotheism. The study of the religion of the people of Canaan does bring out into strong relief the presence and power of those spiritual forces which in spite of the contrary

\* *Historical Geography of the Holy Land*, p. 30.

tendencies of environment and the force of example did in time create there a monotheistic creed and a pure conception of the Divine. Monotheism proper, however, did not enter into the warp and woof of Hebrew religion until the Exile, before which time Israel's monolatry even, was sorely tested and tried. But such monolatry as that of JE was a big step towards that monotheism which was one of Israel's best gifts to the world.

### B.—BELIEF IN THE PERSONALITY OF GOD.

A vivid sense of the personality of God runs through all the JE narratives, and more particularly is expressed in the JE stories in Genesis and Exodus. The writers of these exhibit to us God, not as some abstract philosophical theory, not as an impersonal "force making for righteousness," not as some transcendent Being far off from the sphere of human life and action, still less as a vague possible Something somewhere at the back of things, but as a living, personal reality, in the world even if not of it, in close contact with men, and as One with whom human beings might have fellowship. Jahveh in J's Genesis stories comes into the life of the world as if He were a man. He investigates the condition of things on the earth Himself. He forms Adam and then Eve with His own hands. He holds conversations, He walks and talks, He even wrestles and dines (Gen. xxxii. 24-30; xviii. 1-17)! J. is much more lavish in these anthropomorphisms than E., who is, as we shall see, more deliberately careful not to give a materialistic or corporeal conception of Jahveh. The value of these naïve representations of Jahveh lies



partly in the fact that they help one to realise that God enters into direct personal relations with men, and partly in that they help one to picture God. The ordinary human mind must think of God in concrete terms, and even now conceives most easily of the personality of God in terms drawn from human analogies.

One of the most impressive passages which represents the Divine Being as personal and present is that in which Moses and Jahveh are pictured as speaking together almost as if on familiar terms. "And Jahveh spake unto Moses face to face as a man speaketh unto his friend" (Ex. xxxiii. 11). It is perhaps not too much to say that this clothing of God in human form, that men might see Him in their imaginations and realise that He was not altogether out of man's reach, was in its own way a step towards the Incarnation when God revealed Himself to men in human form, but this time not in beautiful literary pictures but in a real man,—the Son of Man. And now we are able to think of God in terms of that Man.

#### C.—GRADUAL APPREHENSION OF THE SPIRITUALITY OF GOD.

Although the anthropomorphic portrayal of God, and especially of God manifesting Himself in some way or other to human beings, has a great religious value, yet it had its dangers especially amongst those who were all too readily inclined to low and materialistic views of God. Partly for this reason, and partly because the religious teachers of Israel were themselves coming to realise more clearly the spiritual nature of God, the use of the bolder kind of anthropomorphic

representations began to be eliminated in their writings. This tendency is sometimes to be found in J., but much more so in E., where God is rarely spoken of as Himself coming into direct contact with men and Himself appearing to them in the likeness of man.

Instead of appearing Himself, God was represented as revealing Himself in dreams, or else more often through His "angel" or "messenger." This "angel" of Jahveh was not a creature as were the angels of the later books of the Old Testament but was a visible and audible manifestation of the presence and activity of Jahveh Himself.\* He was a picturesque substitute for Jahveh in the describing of His real presence and personal interventions.

There are many examples of this substitution of the Angel of Jahveh for Jahveh wherever it seemed necessary to guard against the idea of Jahveh Himself being such that He could be seen or heard physically, and an illuminating one may be found in the story of Hagar in the wilderness. The Angel of Jahveh meets Hagar and sends her back to her mistress. "The Angel of Jahveh also said to her, Behold, thou shalt bear a son, and thou shalt call his name Ishmael because Jahveh [not the Angel of Jahveh this time, the substitution was not considered necessary when it was a case of cognisance] hath heard of thine ill-treatment" (Gen. xvi. 11 J.). It should be noticed, on the other hand, that the "Angel" identifies Himself with Jahveh in v. 10. "Moreover, the Angel of Jahveh said to her, I will

\* For "Angel of Jahveh" in E. see Gen. xxii. 11. For later ideas of angels, cf. Zech. i. 11f.; Ps. xxxv. 5f.; lxxviii. 49; xci. 11; ciii. 30; Dan. iii. 28.



multiply thy descendants, etc.” The transition is even clearer in the Elohist account of Hagar in the wilderness, this time with Ishmael. “*God* heard the cry of the lad, and the *Angel of God* called to Hagar from Heaven” (Gen. xxi. 17). In this passage even the Angel has become spiritualised. Apparently he is not even seen by Hagar, only heard, while it is from heaven that he speaks.

In addition to the process of shedding anthropomorphisms in descriptions of Jahveh's relations with men, there are other indications in J. and E. that the spirituality of His nature was being recognised by the writers and their school. The narratives of the Patriarchs and of Moses are not told as by men altogether hampered with either the territorial or tribal conceptions of Jahveh. Jahveh is represented as revealing Himself both when and where He will and to whom He will. He communicates with men who are outside the tribe, such as Abimelech the Philistine, Pharaoh the Egyptian, Balaam the Ammonite (or Aramean), and He uses them as the instruments of His will. It must be noticed on the other hand that normally His dealings with outsiders were on behalf of the tribe. Still, the principle once admitted had far-reaching consequences. Similarly in the stories of the past history of the Hebrew race it was made abundantly evident that Jahveh in times past at least was by no means confined to the Israelitish territory of the present. He revealed Himself to Abraham in Ur, which was either in far off Babylon or in Aram, and He showed forth His redemptive power in Egypt. In Palestine itself, in patriarchal days, His presence and

His manifestation of Himself were not altogether confined to certain sanctuaries or holy places,\* though this particular point cannot be pressed very confidently.

In JE we notice, too, that the normal accessories of worship, the altar and mazzebah, etc., are treated rather as accessories than as essentials. When they are mentioned it is generally as the outward accompaniment of intercourse with Jahveh, not as the necessary medium of such intercourse. There is remarkably little stress laid on the outward and visible in worship, and it is probably a legitimate inference that this was owing to the primary interest of the writers in the inward and spiritual side of it. Their interest in the spiritual is the more remarkable since such outward instruments of worship as were mentioned or implied often had their origin in most crude and unspiritual conceptions of the Deity.

Lastly, in regard to Jahveh's close connection with the processes of nature, and especially with the more terrific natural phenomena such as thunder and storm, there are passages in JE where He is apparently recognised not as identified with these but as controlling them, *e.g.*, "I (Jahveh) will cause it to rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights" (Gen. vii. 4). Jahveh rained on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire out of heaven (Gen. xix. 24). Jahveh caused the sea to go back by a strong East wind (Ex. xiv. 21b [J]). Jahveh is represented as the God of pestilence (*e.g.* in

\* Prof. Welch says (*op. cit.* p. 14) "The spirituality of Jahveh is also clearly shown in His relation to the sanctuaries. . . . When we find that most of the places in which Jahveh is declared to have revealed Himself to the patriarchs have no association with any later worship, etc."

the plagues of Egypt) as well as of storm, which shows further that in the mind of the writers of JE He is not identical with storm and the kindred phenomena.

D.—BELIEF IN THE MORAL NATURE OF GOD, AND GROWING INSIGHT INTO HIS CHARACTER.

That Jahveh was conceived of as a moral being, and neither as a blind force nor as an unmoral or arbitrary personality, is constantly implied in JE, and not seldom clearly illustrated. 1. This appears in the ethical demands made upon the Israelites by Jahveh in the Book of the Covenant (Ex. xx.-xxiii.) which is incorporated in JE. Apart from what may be regarded as civil laws and ceremonial regulations, Jahveh is represented as including certain laws of kindness and mercy, the non-fulfilment of which is connected not with civil penalties, but with Jahveh's personal disapproval. "If thou afflict them [any widow or fatherless child] in any wise, and they cry at all unto me, I will surely hear their cry, and my wrath will wax hot" (Ex. xxii. 23, 24). Usury to the poor is forbidden as also is the keeping after sundown of a neighbour's garment taken in pledge,—"when he crieth unto me, I will hear, for I am gracious" (Ex. xxii. 25-27.) (cf. also xxiii. 1-9, and especially the way in which Jahveh, as it were, holds up His own moral example "I do not justify the wicked" xxiii. 7).

Jahveh's moral requirements are pictured as extending beyond His own worshippers. It is for their lack of righteousness and their actual immorality that He destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. xviii. and xix.), and it was because the wickedness of mankind was great

upon the earth that He brought the flood upon the earth (Gen. vi.).

2. Not only is Jahveh shown to be concerned with conduct, but certain fundamental elements in His own character are suggested in certain of the narratives and elsewhere. Jahveh is shown to be *righteous* inasmuch as He punished wickedness. Whether He is *just* is not so clear, for Abraham is represented as interceding with Him lest He consume the innocent with the guilty (Gen. xviii.). One cannot help suspecting, however, that the true purpose of the narrator of this story is to suggest thereby that Jahveh does not really act unjustly nor indiscriminatingly, though at first sight He may appear to His servants to be doing so.

That Jahveh could be *pitiful* appears in the laws of the Covenant to which we have already referred, and also in the beautiful story of the way in which He heard and answered the cry wrung from the thirst-parched lips of the little lad dying in the Wilderness.

Finally we may notice the story of the sacrifice of Isaac, which is the record of a great step in the right apprehension of Jahveh's character. It is not quite certain that the sacrifice of children was ever countenanced in Jahveh-worship\*. It is, however, all too clear that it had a place in the kindred and neighbouring religions. Even in the religions of far more civilised

\* There can be little doubt, however, that up to the time of the Exile some of the Hebrews did sacrifice their children, and there is also little doubt that in certain cases at least it was to Jahveh that the ghastly offering was made, cf. *e.g.* Jer. vii. 31 and xix. 5; Micah vi. 6; Ezekiel and Isaiah likewise repudiate the practice. It is possible that latterly most of such sacrifices were not made to Jahveh, but to some neighbouring Deity such as Moloch, and that where they were actually made to Jahveh, it was done in imitation of the heathen practices round about.

peoples, long after human sacrifice had revolted ordinary humanitarian instincts and various substitutes had been contrived for it, there remained deep-rooted the conviction that a human life, and especially the life of a son, was in the eyes of the god far the most precious and efficacious thing a man could offer, and that if nothing else would please the god such a sacrifice would do so\*.

The story of the offering of Isaac embodies the apprehension of the fact that, though Jahveh was well pleased that Abraham should have been willing to give Him his best and most precious possession, yet He was not a god who would have any such deed as a human sacrifice perpetrated in the worship of Him. The story involves the recognition that Jahveh's character is such that He refuses such cruel offerings. How far back this recognition went in the religious history of the Hebrews, one cannot say ; there is no good reason why it should not go back to Abraham. It may seem a step that does not lead very far forward, but until it was made, the way was not clear for the true comprehension of what the Love of God meant.

\* *e.g.*, 2 Kings, III. 27.



## CHAPTER V

### FROM MONOLATRY TO MONOTHEISM

#### A.—OVERTHROW OF PLURALISM IN JAHVEH WORSHIP.

One important step in the direction of pure monotheism which was partly concurrent with the growing apprehension of Jahveh's "supremacy," and which, as we shall see, finally resulted in making monotheism fundamental in Judaism, may first be discussed before carrying forward the main point.

It would seem that sometimes the worship of local baals persisted alongside the worship of Jahveh in various parts of the land. Where this was the case, it frequently happened that even after Jahveh had superseded the local baal, the worship tended to revert to type. Instead of local baals there came to be local Jahvehs, just as in the Roman Catholic Church has grown up the cult of local Madonnas, which are popularly worshipped as if they were distinct persons. The danger was that monolatrist Jahvism might really revert in practice to a kind of polytheism of its own. For this reason, and perhaps still more because the worship at some of these local shrines came more and more to approximate to the immoral and



unspiritual type of worship prevalent at baal sanctuaries,\* it was felt in the seventh century, if not earlier, by some among those whose eyes had been enlightened to see the utter disparity between Jahveh and the baals, and also between Jahveh as He really was and a Jahveh conceived in terms of one baal or many baals, that the only remedy in the national religion would be suppression of all these local Jahveh sanctuaries and the centralisation of the public worship of Jahveh at *one sanctuary*, viz., Jerusalem.† The advantages of this were, (1) that the worship could more easily be kept pure under the direction of the more enlightened priests and prophets at the one central sanctuary, more especially as Jerusalem may possibly have had no previous associations of baal-worship; (2) that there being but one lawful sanctuary, it might be recognised once and for all that Jahveh was one and not many, and that a stop might then be put to the process of differentiating the Jahvehs of the various local shrines. The policy stood in short for the final conquest over the polytheistic tendencies of the land.

The danger of the confusion of Jahveh-worship and baal-worship had been perceived by the great prophets of the eighth century, especially by Hosea. The actual religious policy based on this recognition was formulated

\* Probably there were certain elements common both to the baal and the Jahveh sanctuaries from the beginning, such as the sacred pillar (*mazzebah*) and the sacred pole (*asherah*), the altar, and sometimes at least, the image of the Deity, *e.g.* the golden calf at Bethel.

† This was the more easy as the Northern Kingdom with its many recognised shrines had now disappeared (721 B.C.), while the Kingdom of Judah itself had become reduced to very small dimensions.

somewhere in the seventh century, and was incorporated in the Book of Deuteronomy in which is enshrined and formulated so much of the prophetic teaching of the previous half century. In this book, the law of the *One Sanctuary*\* is set forth (Deut. xii. 1-18; xvi. 5, 6, etc.). This law was rigorously put into force by Josiah at his great reformation in 621 B.C., the Temple at Jerusalem was cleansed, and the local sanctuaries were suppressed with a high hand (2 Kings xxiii.).

Along with this doctrine of the one Sanctuary came what has been called "the fundamental Deuteronomic law," that Jahveh Himself is One. "Hear, O Israel, Jahveh thy God is one Jahveh" (Deut. vi. 4). This did not mean in the first instance, as afterwards it came to be understood, that there was only one God and that Jahveh was that one. It was not out of accord with such a belief,† but it was primarily a declaration of the unity of Jahveh, as contrasted with the plurality of baal, and with the apparent plurality of a Jahveh of many sanctuaries.

Deuteronomy thus represents the last stage in the great fight against polytheism and everything connected with it, but especially against that subtle form of polytheism which invaded the cult of Jahveh from the cult of the baals, which may be called poly-Jahvism.

\* "The older law books, far from forbidding sacrifice at altars other than in Jerusalem formally sanction erection of such altars. . . . Elijah was in despair at the sacrilege which threw down such altars." G. F. Moore. Art. Deut. in *Encyclopædia Biblica* I., col. 1085.

† As a matter of fact, it is clear from other passages in the book that the Deuteronomic writers were not far off from such a categorical denial of other gods than Jahveh, only it is not stated here.

From Josiah's time the belief in the unity of Jahveh with all that that involves was never again really in danger. Idolatry reappeared from time to time, but it was always distinct from Jahveh-worship.

B.—APPREHENSION OF THE SUPREMACY AND  
UNIQUENESS OF JAHVEH.

In the earlier stages of the religion of the Israelites in Canaan we find the sincere worshippers of Jahveh worshipping Him alone and strenuously deprecating the worship of any other gods. In the main the problem then before the Hebrews was not the question of the existence of other gods of other nations or of their relation to them, but of their attitude towards what one may call the native deities of their own land, in particular the baals. When the introduction of the worship of foreign gods was attempted it brought up the question of the loyalty of the people to Jahveh as their national god rather than the more theological question of the relation of these foreign gods to Jahveh. That is to say, Monolatry rather than Monotheism was for many centuries the practical issue in Israel, although the conception of the nature of their God Jahveh, who alone was to be worshipped, was growing and expanding in such a way in the minds of some, at least, of the Hebrews, that it was rapidly turning into monotheism.

In the writings of the eighth century (800-700 B.C.) it is difficult either to affirm or deny, to prove or disprove, the existence of a full monotheistic view of God in the mind of the writers. It is possible they were to

all intents and purposes monotheists but had not analysed the position or yet realised its implications.

The growth of the belief in one God, and one only, seems to have come mainly along the line of growth in the realisation and experience of the *supremacy* of Jahveh over all other gods, till finally He so filled the religious horizon of His people as to leave room for no other gods beside Him, the others being simply crowded out. The more His universal power and living reality were grasped by faith, the more did belief in the power and even the reality of the gods of the other nations fade away, until, if they were thought of at all, it was as lifeless ghosts, or as degraded demons, robbed of their power and might.

As the Hebrews came into close contact with the great conquering nations of their world, the Assyrians and later the Babylonians, their monolatry was severely tested. From this testing, as will be seen, the nation finally emerged not as monolatrists but as monotheists; and their monotheism, so far from being an abstract theory of the schools, entered into the very life-blood of the national religion.

It was the common belief among the Semites that when one nation conquered another it was owing to the superiority of the god or gods of the victors. Minor defeats might be held to be owing to the deliberate defections of the god of the vanquished, probably because he was displeased with them. But normally defeat of the nation meant the defeat of the god. The Hebrews themselves always attributed their victories to Jahveh, and felt that these demonstrated His power and superiority. The Assyrians and the Babylonians,

as we know from their inscriptions,\* also habitually attributed their conquests to their gods ; and as State after State and kingdom after kingdom went down before the might of the Assyrians in the latter part of the eighth century, it seemed to the Semitic peoples that no gods could withstand the all-powerful Assyrian deities. One after another the other gods, so it appeared to them, proved insufficient, powerless, useless. The situation and the current reading of it are clearly portrayed in the account given in Is. xxxvi. 18-20 of Sennacherib's message to the people of Jerusalem shortly before the great and unexpected deliverance that came to Jerusalem.

Hearken not unto Hezekiah when he misleads you saying "Jahveh will deliver us." Has any of the gods of the nations ever delivered his land out of the power of the King of Assyria ? Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad ? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim ? Where are the gods† of the land of Samaria that they have delivered Samaria out of my power ? Who are they among all the gods of the countries that have delivered their country out of my power ?

"Who are they among all the gods of the countries that have delivered their country out of my power ?" Thanks to Isaiah, the people of Jerusalem did not act in accordance with these suggestions, although they must have found them hard to resist, and the city was not surrendered. In consequence of the wonderful and unexpected deliverance that ensued (Is. xxxvii. 36-38) Jahveh's power and might were vindicated

\* *e.g.* In Sennacherib's inscription dealing with his campaign against Jerusalem and the Philistine cities in 701 B.C., he says : "The might of the arms of Ashur my lord overwhelmed them," and again, "With the help of Ashur my lord I fought with them, and accomplished their defeat." Taylor Cylinder, Col. II.

† It must not be forgotten that the God of Samaria was Jahveh.



in the eyes of the Judeans, instead of His being discredited and relegated to the position of the gods of Hamath and Arpad. He had held His own, and more than held His own, with the great gods of Assyria. It is instructive to note that Isaiah had learned this lesson of Jahveh's superiority before this, even in the time of Judah's humiliation, as witness his great poem in x. 5-15, 27-34.

- 5 Woe Asshur, rod of mine anger,  
The staff in whose hand is mine indignation!
- 6 Against an impious nation am I wont to send him,  
And against the people of my wrath I give him a charge.
- 7 But he . . . not so doth he plan. . .  
For destruction is in his heart  
To cut off the nations not a few.
- 8, 9 For he saith . . . "Is not Calno's faith that of  
Carchemish?
- 11 "Shall not I, as I have done to Samaria and her idols,  
Do likewise to Jerusalem and her images?
- 13 By the strength of my hands have I done it " . . .
- 15 Shall the axe vaunt itself over him who hews therewith?  
Or shall the saw magnify itself over him who wields it?  
As if a rod could sway him who lifts it,  
As if a staff could lift up him who is not wood.

In other words, in Isaiah's eyes great Assyria was only Jahveh's instrument of punishment and could do no more than Jahveh allowed. But his faith and the faith of his disciples must have been greatly strengthened by the turning back of Assyria. Jahveh had now been, as it were, measured against the greatest of the gods of the world and had not been found wanting.



This new and enlarged view of Jahveh found expression in Deuteronomy.

What great nation is there that hath a god so nigh unto them as our God whenever we call upon Him? (Deut. iv. 7). For Jahveh, your God, He is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, the mighty, the terrible (Deut. x. 17).

Jahveh, He is God in Heaven above and on earth beneath. There is none else (Deut. iv. 39).

Unto thee it (*i.e.*, Jahveh's mighty prowess) was shewed that thou mightest know that Jahveh, He is God: *there is none else beside Him* (Deut. iv. 35).

Here we have Jahveh compared with other gods, even the greatest of them, and His superiority exultingly announced. The repeated phrase "there is none else," if it really means that no other gods exist except Jahveh, and is not a hyperbolic way of saying "is incomparable,"\* would seem to be a distinct advance even on Isaiah's position and to leave no more to be said in a statement of the purest monotheism.

Once more, however, came a great testing time. Jerusalem fell before Babylon, and the Judeans became like them of Hamath and Arpad and Sepharvaim. It seemed as if the gods of Babylon had utterly prevailed, and as if Jahveh had utterly failed to withstand their might. Instead of the mocking question "Where are

\* It is not safe, however, to push such phrases to their utmost limits. Parallels may be found in Babylonian hymns where no monotheism is intended.

"O Lord (Sin, the Moon god) chief of the gods who alone is exalted in earth or heaven,"

"Who is exalted in Heaven? Thou alone art exalted  
Who is exalted on earth? Thou alone art exalted," etc.

Similarly, Ishtar is addressed as "sovereign of sovereigns, goddess of goddesses."

Rogers, *Cuneiform Parallels to the Old Testament*, pp. 141, 144, 153.

the gods of Hamath and Arpad ? ” the question which the Judeans now had to face was “ Where is Jahveh ? ” And the answer, according to the compelling logic of circumstances, seemed to be “ Powerless, before the superior might of the gods of our adversaries.” The presence of this great problem for even the faithful among the Judeans is seen in such Psalms as xlii. 3f., which was written about this time.

3. My tears have been my meat day and night while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God ?

10. As with a sword in my bones mine adversaries reproach me while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God ?

There was no wonderful deliverance this time to strengthen and confirm the wavering faith of those who believed in Jahveh. Indeed, the belief in the inviolability of Jahveh's sanctuary, on which many had based their faith from the time of Isaiah onward, had broken down and had shown itself to be as a “ bruised reed, which if a man lean on, it will go into his hand and pierce it.”

Yet from this black experience, which shook all faith in Jahveh to the very foundations, emerged a nation whose fundamental and unalterable conviction had come to be that their God was a God so Almighty that none could stand before Him, so supreme that beside Him even the great gods of their conquerors were no gods, such a God that the belief in Him precluded even the belief in the existence of any other. This would seem to show that a nation's beliefs are not always moulded by its circumstances.

This incomparable superiority of Jahveh to all else, whether to the so-called gods of the nations that still oppressed the Jews, or to anything and everything else in the universe, is magnificently set forth in many passages in second Isaiah written at the close of the exile and later. The most important passages are : Is. xl. 12-31 ; xli. 21-34 ; xliv. 6-23 ; xlv. 24-28 ; xlv. 1-25 ; xlv. 1-13. If these are examined in full, it will be seen how closely the thought of Jahveh as the One and only God is connected with the apprehension of His knowledge, power and presence and of His creative relations to the Universe. It was, to no small extent, the growing apprehension of all these which helped the worshippers of Jahveh to realise that there could be only one such God.

Perhaps the most striking utterances of the prophet in this connection relate to his estimate of other gods than Jahveh, and particularly to his scornful rejection of the very idea of their existence. He satirically identifies the gods with their images, " unjustly, of course so far as the history of religion is concerned, but in consequence of the belief that apart from these man-made images they do not really exist."\* He ridicules the belief in them as irrational and absurd. As Sir G. A. Smith says, " the gods of the nations are treated as things in whose existence no reasonable person can possibly believe."† The prophet " held his monotheism *with all his mind*." We find him " conscious of it not only as a religious affection, but as a necessary intellectual conviction."† In chapter xlv. he scathingly

\* Schultz, *Old Testament Theology*, Vol. I., p. 303.

† G. A. Smith, *Isaiah*, Vol. II., p. 40.

describes the making of a god in striking contrast with Jahveh, who had no beginning.

- 6 Thus saith the King of Israel,  
Even his Redeemer, Jahveh of Hosts;  
I am the first and the last;  
And beside me there is no God . . . .
- 10 Who has ever fashioned a god ?
- 14 One cuts down cedar trees for his use,  
15 So it becomes fuel for men . . . .  
He also sets it ablaze and bakes bread;  
Yea, he makes a god and worships it . . . .
- 16 Half of it he burns in the fire . . . .  
He warms himself and says Aha,  
I am warm and see the glow.
- 17 The rest of it he makes into a god;  
He bows down to his image and worships it,  
And prays to it and says,  
Deliver me, for thou art my God !

In chapter xli. there is a passage where the prophet challenges any of the heathen gods to do something god-like, comparable with the deeds of Jahveh,—or indeed to do anything whatsoever :

- 21 Bring forward your champion saith Jahveh the One  
God.  
Produce your idols, saith Jacob's King . . . .
- 23 Announce things to come hereafter that we may know  
that ye are gods,  
Yea *do something*, be it good or bad . . . .
- 24 Behold ye are nought and your work is nothingness.

In chapter xlvi. the prophet specially singles out the chief of the gods of Babylon and contrasts them with

Jahveh. Even these, he prophesies, shall prove to be nothing but burdens for tired beasts, for they shall be carried away helpless into exile. Jahveh, on the other hand, so far from being such a one as needs, forsooth, to be carried, is one who will always bear up his people.

- 1 Bel is bowed down, Nebo stoops,  
The idols are consigned to the beasts and cattle,  
They are *lifted up as a burden* for tired animals,
- 2 They stoop and are bowed down together,  
They are unable to rescue the burden,  
But themselves are gone into captivity.
- 3 Hearken to me, O house of Jacob  
And all the remnant of the house of Israel,  
Who have *been carried as a burden* from birth,  
Who have been borne from the mother's womb:
- 4 Even to old age I am the same,  
Until ye are grey-haired *I will support you* ;  
It is I who have borne the burden and will still carry it,  
It is I who bear and will deliver.
- 5 To whom will ye liken me and make me equal ?  
To whom compare me that I may be similar ?

The thought of Jahveh as God alone, the one and only ultimate source and creator of all things, is amplified and is reiterated again and again. It is the ever-recurring theme, the constant groundwork of the prophet's message, the basis of his hopes for Israel. This is most clearly seen in the wonderful poem, Is. xl. 12-31, and in chapter xlv., from which we may quote a few selections :

- 5 I am Jahveh, and there is none else ;  
Beside me there is no God.
- 6 . . . there is none beside me ;  
I am Jahveh and there is none other.

- 7 Maker of light and creator of darkness,  
Bringer of good fortune and author of evil,  
I, Jahveh, perform all this . . . .
- 12 It was I who made the earth,  
And mankind upon it I created:  
It was my hands that stretched out the Heavens . . .
- 14 There is none other God at all.
- 18 Thus saith Jahveh—he is the one God,  
The founder and maker of the earth,  
I am Jahveh and there is none else,  
No God beside me.

Similar thoughts frequently occur in later writings in the Old Testament, especially in the Psalter,\* though seldom more powerfully and passionately expressed. From this time onwards monotheism was axiomatic in the religion of the Jews. It was the fact above all others with regard to God that the whole Jewish nation most perfectly and purely apprehended. The lesson was so well learned that when Jesus came He was able to take it for granted in His further and fuller revelation of the Father. It was, moreover, almost the first lesson that Gentile converts whether to Judaism or to Christianity had to learn.

\* Cf. *e.g.* Ps. cxv., a late poem which combines the thoughts of Ps. cxlii. with those of 2 Isaiah.



## CHAPTER VI

### REALISATION THAT GOD IS SPIRIT

#### A.—FROM THE VISIBLE SYMBOL TO THE UNSEEN PRESENCE.

The causes which led up to the final establishment of monotheism in the religion of Israel were closely related to the apprehension of the spirituality of Jahveh. Monotheism must be a spiritual religion, and a truly spiritual conception of God cannot but emerge into a monotheistic religion.

#### *Prohibition of images of Jahveh.*

A great step towards dissociating Jahveh from material and corporeal conceptions of His nature was the prohibition of images or idolatrous symbols of Him. The first evidence we have of such a prohibition being in any way enforced is in the reign of Hezekiah who, in the course of some kind of religious reformation undertaken probably under the influence of Isaiah, " brake in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made : for until these days the children of Israel did burn incense unto it " (2 Kings xviii. 4.).

As has been shown\* images of Jahveh were in common though not universal use until the eighth

\* pp. 26f.

century, and there is no record in the earlier strands of history of their being in any way discountenanced by the religious leaders and teachers, whether prophets, priests or kings ; the first clear recognition of them as dangerous to true religion being in Hosea (c. 745—c. 725 B.C.).\* In view of this statement it is needful to account for the second commandment in the decalogue now embodied in JE. (Ex. xx. 4), "Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image, etc."† It seems most likely that what the command originally forbade was the making and worshipping not of any image whatsoever but of images of other gods than Jahveh, for the Hebrews were to have "none other gods beside" Jahveh (Ex. xx. 3), Jahveh being "a jealous god" (Ex. xx. 5). The association of the same ideas in xx. 23 should also be noticed—"Ye shall not make other gods with me: gods of silver or gods of gold ye shall not make unto you." If, however, the prohibition of images was intended to include images of Jahveh, as well as other kinds, then it may be that it was inserted by a later prophetic writer. However that may be, the prohibition of images of Jahveh is abundantly clear a century later than Hosea in Deuteronomy, and it is further shown that it is definitely connected with the apprehension of Jahveh's spirituality or, at any rate, of that negative side of it which one may call His non-corporeality.

\* Hosea viii. 4-6 ; xiii. 2. etc.

† If this is really a prohibition of the use of images of Jahveh, and if it is really ancient, then it seems simply to have been set aside, ignored and lost sight of.

Jahveh, according to Deuteronomy, is not such an one as could be figured in any outward representation. The outward and material image could in no wise catch the likeness of the inward, invisible and spiritual.

Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves, for ye *saw no manner of form* on the day when Jahveh spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire, lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make for yourselves a graven image in the *form of any figure* (Deut. iv. 15, 16).

There was no longer any place for images in such spiritual worship as that of Jahveh.

Probably the use of images of Jahveh had long been discontinued by the more spiritually-minded of His people as unnecessary, but now it is definitely recognised as unworthy, misleading and altogether incongruous. The Deuteronomic school were for making a clean sweep of all idolatrous practices and for purifying the worship of Jahveh from every debasing element in it. Their teaching and policy were rigorously enforced by King Josiah. So successful was he in respect to the presence of outward representations in Jahveh-worship that a century later it was possible for the great unknown Prophet of the Exile (Second Isaiah) to hold up Jahveh in scornful contrast with the idols of the other nations as a God in connection with whom images were simply unthinkable (v. p. 59f).

### *The One Sanctuary.*

The whole Deuteronomic Reformation (under Josiah) even apart from its actual war on the use of

images was in the direction of emphasising the spirituality of Jahveh, inasmuch as by the suppression of all the sanctuaries save that of Jerusalem it helped to purify His worship and remove from it materialistic and degrading associations. The God of the One Sanctuary in Jerusalem was more purely and spiritually conceived of than ever before.

### *No Sanctuary.*

The danger of the "one sanctuary" was, however, lest Jahveh and His presence should be too closely identified with it. But, as Sir G. A. Smith says, "It was well that this temple should enjoy its singular rights for only thirty years and then be destroyed. For a monotheism, however lofty, which depended on the existence of any shrine . . . was not a purely spiritual faith . . . The city and temple, therefore, went up in flames that Israel might learn that God is a spirit and dwelleth not in temples made with hands."\* In the exile the Jews learned that even the One Sanctuary was non-essential, and they then had the experience for a time of being a nation with a God but without a sanctuary, even as John pictured the New Jerusalem as being a "city without a Church."

### *The Empty Shrine.*

At the destruction of Jerusalem the last link with the old semi-materialistic conceptions of Jahveh was broken; the ark disappeared, which had of old been looked upon as a visible substitute for Jahveh's

\* *Isaiah* Vol. II, p. 43.

personal presence—disappeared never to reappear again.\* When the temple was rebuilt the inner shrine was *empty* and remained so until the Temple was no more.

#### B.—FROM THE ANTHROPOMORPHIC TO THE TRANSCENDENT.

It has been shown in Chapter IV, Section C, how there were signs even in the Jahvistic and Elohist documents of the Pentateuch, especially in the latter, that a growing apprehension of the spirituality and transcendence of Jahveh and sense of the danger of materialistic conceptions of Him had led to an attempt to avoid anthropomorphisms in some of the narratives. This was especially the case in descriptions of incidents relating to manifestations of Jahveh. There was in some of these an evident shrinking from giving any impression that Jahveh Himself was such that He could be either visible or audible.

The culmination of such attempts is to be seen in Ezekiel's description of the vision of God granted to him at the beginning of his ministry and twice thereafter. Ezekiel in his description of this vision was apparently trying to express a two-fold impression that had been borne in upon his heart and mind, (1) the ineffable majesty and transcendence of Jahveh and (2) the fact that Jahveh could and did manifest His presence unmistakably even in

\* Cf. Jer. iii. 16. It was neither remembered nor missed nor made again.



Babylonia (see pp. 76f.). The theological language of his time was inadequate to convey the latter fact clearly without the use of expressions which seemed to conflict with the former. The elaborate precautions which Ezekiel takes with his language so as not to convey a wrong impression or detract from the thought of Jahveh's spirituality and majesty, and yet to make his description intensely vivid, are very striking and illustrate how far the prophets had travelled theologically since the writer of J. used his anthropomorphisms with such naïve freedom.

The setting of the vision was a scene characteristic of the land of Ezekiel's banishment—a great dust storm, shot through and through with the blaze of the sun, the whirling columns of sand assuming dazzling and fantastic shapes and making an awesome, glorious spectacle. As the prophet looked, these vague shapes seemed to resolve into definite forms, clad in mystic symbolic grandeur.

Out of its midst appeared the *forms* of four living creatures

. . . .

And in the midst of the living creatures was *an appearance* like glowing coals of fire like torches and it was moving up and down among the living creatures . . . . And on the heads of the creatures was a firmament . . . . Above the firmament . . . was something that *resembled* sapphire, in the *form* of a throne, and on a *form* of a throne was a *form* which *resembled* a man. . . . From what seemed his loins above and below I saw what looked like fire surrounded by brightness, like the bow that appears in a cloud in a rainy day; such was the brightness round about. It was the *appearance* of the *likeness* of the *glory* of Jahveh. (Ezekiel, i. 4, 13, 22, 26-28).



It is interesting to notice that in this strange attempt to suggest the indescribable transcendent majesty of the Most High, Ezekiel makes it quite clear that he has not lost hold of the real personality of God.\* On the other hand, though attempting vividly to portray the real presence of God, the prophet piles up expressions intended to guard the thought of the transcendence and spirituality of Jahveh from any intrusion of corporeal or anthropomorphic conceptions. More especially is this to be seen in the last sentence quoted—"the *appearance* of the *likeness* of the *glory* of Jahveh."

#### C.—FROM THE OUTWARD AND MATERIAL TO THE INWARD AND SPIRITUAL.

Nowhere is the conception of the nature of Jahveh so clearly demonstrated as in the estimate of the kind of worship which Jahveh chiefly desired and which was most suitable for Him. The type of worship and the value set upon it are sure guides to the estimate by the worshippers of the nature and character of their deity, though it should be observed that in the outward forms of worship practice generally lags behind doctrine, and external rites are sometimes preserved into which new meanings may be read, which are fundamentally different from the original significations.

Sacrifice was, among the Hebrews as among the kindred Semitic nations, perhaps the most prominent and important element in worship. As we have

\* "On the form of a throne was a form which resembled a man."

seen the practice was originally based on low or material views of the deity and pre-supposed a God, who had a kind of physical kinship or blood-relationship with His people, and, more generally, a God who could feast, if not on the solid flesh of the offerings, yet on the same things rarified and distilled into fragrant smoke and savoury odour, and who could somehow or other drink the blood, or at least the life poured out with it.

With the possible exception of certain of the "communion" sacrifices,\* sacrifices were intended as *gifts* to the god, such as would give him gratification. They could scarcely be thought to do so, unless the god were really supposed to partake of them in some way or make some use of them, unless one takes it that they were believed to have some magical efficacy whereby the power of the god was enlisted on behalf of the sacrificer even apart from the will of the God ; but of this idea there would seem to be little or no indication in Hebrew religion.

Gifts are not offered unless it is supposed that they have some value for the recipient. They are meaningless otherwise. The purpose of gift-sacrifices at least was primarily (1) to enlist or retain the favour and goodwill of the god, or (2) to appease him if offended. The god was, in fact, looked upon somewhat in the light of a sheikh or a prince who required to be propitiated with gifts. The more lavish the gifts, the better pleased the recipient and the more likely to show favour to the donor.

\* Even in the "communion sacrifices" the rite was a kind of feast in which the deity and the worshippers each had their share.

In this way some sacrifices were looked upon as a tribute,\* others as bribes, others as fines, others as substantial tokens of allegiance or of gratitude for past favours. (They were never substitutes for worshippers, though not infrequently they were substitutes for persons belonging to the worshipper.) In general, the practice of sacrificing as a material method of guaranteeing continuance of divine favour was based on the assumptions that the deity's nature was such, (1) that these material offerings had a real value for him and that perhaps he even needed them, (2) that his attitude towards the worshippers could be directly influenced by such things. That is what the actual sacrifices meant at first to the Hebrews, unless they meant nothing at all and were simply considered as some routine the meaning of which had been lost but which was nevertheless so important and so well pleasing to Jahveh that it could only be neglected at their peril.

Now there can be little doubt but that there were some in Israel from very early times who instinctively rejected these ideas even while they continued the practice based on them. It is to be noticed that in J. and E., though it is the record of the religious history of the nation and its ancestors, sacrifice has remarkably little place.

It was Amos, however, who was the great pioneer of spirituality in worship. One of the marked features of his prophecy is his attack on "externalism," i.e. the belief that outward ceremonial and

\* Cf. W. Robertson Smith, *Religion of the Semites*, ed. 2. pp. 217, 226, 236, 240f, 448.

ritual, such particularly as sacrifice, was indispensable to true religion and worship. He proclaimed with no uncertain sound the startling doctrine (which very few Jews and not by any means all Christians have really believed or acted upon to this very day) that rites and ceremonies, sacrifices and incense and the whole paraphernalia of what is external in worship were altogether the non-essentials.

I hate, I despise your feasts,  
And I will not *smell*\* the savour of your festivals.  
With your *presents*† I will not be pleased  
And the peace-offering of your fatlings I will not regard  
with favour.  
Banish from me the din of your songs (*i.e.* hymns, etc.),  
For to the melody of your lyres I will not listen.  
But let your justice roll on as a flood of water  
And righteousness like an unfailing stream.

(Am. v. 21-24.)

Isaiah, in this respect a close follower of Amos, uses quite as strong language :

To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to me ?  
saith Jahveh.

I am full of the burnt offerings of rams and the fat of  
fed beasts,

I delight not in the *blood* of bullocks or of lambs or of  
he-goats,

. . . . Bring no more vain oblations ;

The *odour* of sacrifices is an abomination to me ;

\* Notice the scornful reference to the *crude and popular* belief that Jahveh physically partook of the feasts.

† Notice also the reference to sacrifices as gifts.

New moon and sabbath . . . I cannot endure.  
 . . . Though ye make many prayers, I will not hear,  
 Your hands are stained with blood ; wash that ye may be  
 clean.  
 . . . Cease to do evil, learn to do good.

(Is. i. 11-15.)

Similarly Amos iv. 4, 5 ; v. 4, 5. ; Hosea vi. 6 ; Micah vi. 6, etc. Both Amos and Isaiah in passages such as these seem entirely to repudiate the practice of sacrifice in the worship of Jahveh. At first sight they appear to advocate a purely ethical and spiritual religion from which all outward forms in worship are banished as utterly irrelevant and valueless.

What they certainly did was forcibly to reject the popular conceptions of Jahveh which lay behind the minds of the sacrificers and provided the chief motive for sacrifice. They desired also to show that not only sacrifice but all other external elements in worship such as singing and music, even prayers and fasting, were useless and worse than useless unless accompanied by justice, righteousness and morality. It did not necessarily follow that if the heart and life were right even then there was no place for the outward and visible in worship ; but what value these might have, they did not suggest. But if these had any place, it followed that it could only be as accessories, the presence or absence of which was non-essential.

Amos and Jeremiah further declared clearly and emphatically that sacrifices were not even ordained by Jahveh. " Thus saith Jahveh of hosts, the God of Israel . . . I spake not unto your fathers



nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt concerning burnt offerings and sacrifices " (Jer. vii. 21, 22, see also Amos v. 25). "Sacrifice," as Sir G. A. Smith says, "had never been the divine, the revealed element in the religion of Jahveh. Nevertheless, before Amos no prophet in Israel appears to have said so."\* This great movement, one of the most remarkable in the history of religion, towards a wholly spiritual worship based on a wholly spiritual conception of God, never came to full fruition in the life of the Jewish nation. During the exile, the Jews were compelled to do without sacrifice and the regulation ceremonials in their worship. In practice they found they could get on without them. But when opportunity came and the temple was rebuilt the sacrificial system which had been carefully re-elaborated† was recommenced, a proceeding which seems to have been countenanced by and even supported by the prophets both exilic and post-exilic. It may be that they recognised that the nation was not yet ripe for so drastic a break as the abolition of the outward forms of worship handed down from their fathers. But though the practice of sacrifices continued without further challenge, the realisation gained ground that Jahveh's supreme demand in worship was righteousness, justice and mercy, the soul full of gratitude and the broken

\* G. A. Smith, *The Book of the Twelve Prophets*, Vol. I. p. 104.

† This is embodied in the Priestly Code. This code represents a retrogressive movement as regards the principle of the Pre-exilic Prophets. But on the other hand it probably represents a great advance in the purity and religious significance of popular worship and ritual.



penitent heart. There is evidence that some at least recognised that these were the sacrifices truly acceptable unto Jahveh. This is very beautifully expressed in not a few of the Psalms which reflect the religious conviction and experience of these later times.

I will magnify Him with thanksgiving and it will please Jahveh better than an ox or a bullock that hath horns and hoofs (Ps. lxix. 30).

Sacrifice and offering thou hast no delight in ; mine ears  
hast thou opened :

Burnt offering and sin offering thou hast not required.

Then said I, Lo I come : in the roll of the book it is written  
of me,

I delight to do thy will, O God.

(Ps. xl. 6, etc.)

There is no true worship of God apart from the offering of heart and will to Him.

And lastly we may quote the curiously incongruous section of Ps. li. 15-end, when there is an approval of ceremonial sacrifices immediately following a statement that sacrifices are unnecessary and that the true sacrifices are those of the spirit.

For thou delightest not in sacrifice, else would I give it :

Thou hast no pleasure in burnt offering.

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit :

A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not  
despise.

Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion ;

Then shalt thou delight in proper sacrifices,

In burnt offering and whole burnt offering.

Then shall they offer bullocks upon thy altar.

It should be observed that the spirituality of God as here illustrated is primarily ethical rather than

metaphysical, a perception of the heart rather than a reflection of the intellect.

There are few things in which the greater prophets showed themselves more truly the forerunners of Jesus and the pioneers of His work and teaching than in this great assault of theirs upon the material as opposed to the spiritual element in worship, and the outward as opposed to the inward. They in very truth prepared the way for Christianity, the most spiritual of all religions, and for Him whose teaching as to worship might be summed up in His pregnant saying "God is Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth."

## CHAPTER VII

### UNIVERSALITY OF GOD

#### A.—FROM THE LOCAL TO THE UNIVERSAL.

Closely related to the unity and spirituality of God was the apprehension of His universality.

The great discovery which the Hebrew Prophets ultimately made with regard to Jahveh was that distance could not separate them from His presence. The doctrine of the Divine omnipresence was for them a fact of religion of the most vital importance.

It has already been shown how the territorial view of God was the prevailing one among the Hebrews and how they also tended to localise Jahveh at certain shrines and sacred places, where He might be found and from whence occasionally He issued to succour His people or otherwise manifest Himself. We have seen, too, how JE is not altogether hampered by these local and territorial ideas. Indeed, nearly all the prophetic writers break through them somewhere or other, though as a rule incidentally, and generally as if without realising the full bearing of their inconsistency with the common view.

The limitation of worship to the one sanctuary, valuable though it was in other ways, helped further

to limit and localise the presence of Jahveh. The temple at Jerusalem was looked upon as the one earthly abiding-place of Jahveh, absence from which practically meant absence from Jahveh's presence, for there "He had made His name to dwell." Consequently exile from Jerusalem was generally felt to mean exile from Jahveh. Babylonia, for example, was thought to be far from His presence and probably beyond the sphere of His effective influence.

It fell to the prophet Ezekiel, a man whose heart-strings were knit to the sanctuary at Jerusalem and whose dream was its restoration with the "glory of Jahveh filling the House"—it fell to him to proclaim to his fellow captives that Jahveh was still to be found by those of His people who sought for Him even in that foreign land to which they had been forced and to proclaim to them that He was not far from any one of them.

Thereupon the word of Jahveh came unto me, Son of man and all ye exiled Israelites, of whom those who are dwelling in Jerusalem say "Far away are ye from Jahveh"! . . . Thus saith Jahveh I have indeed sent them far away among the nations. . . . but I will be their sanctuary . . . in the lands into which they have come (Ezek. xi. 14-16).

To Ezekiel himself also came an overwhelming personal experience that Jahveh could and did reveal His presence and manifest His glory in other places than the sanctuary and in other lands than Canaan—even in a profane land. This he has recorded and tried to describe in his book (Ez. i. ;

also viii.-xi., and xl.-xlviii.). He is probably not the first prophet who believed that this was possible, but he was the first of whom we know who found it true for himself, and thus it was he who was able to teach the lesson to Israel.

The earliest prophet, who, in a sense, began to see and preach the omnipresence of Jahveh, was Amos,—a prophet who, as we shall see, had a particularly wide outlook and an amazingly broad view of God. It is, with him, far from a comforting doctrine. His clearest statement is contained in the last chapter of his book. The thought there expressed is that none of the sinful people of North Israel whom he is addressing can possibly hope to escape from Jahveh. His message was that it was impossible for any of them to *get out of reach of the arm of Jahveh's vengeance*; that like Nemesis He would dog their steps wherever they might go and would search them out wherever they might attempt to hide. In itself the passage can hardly be taken as teaching or as necessarily implying the universal presence of Jahveh. It is a great step in that direction, though much of it is poetic hyperbole, and both the thought and language in it were later readily developed into a most comprehensive statement of that doctrine.

Not one of them shall escape . . .

If they dig through to Sheol,

Thence will my hand take them;

And if they climb up to the sky,

Thence will I bring them down.

And if they hide themselves on the top of Carmel,\*

\* Carmel was covered with caves and hiding places.

Thence will I search them out and take them.  
 And if they hide out of my sight at the bottom of the sea,  
 Thence will I command the sea-serpent to bite them.  
 And if they go into captivity before their enemies,  
 Thence will I command the sword to slay them.

(Amos ix. 1-4.)

Jeremiah echoes Amos' thought of Jahveh as one who cannot be escaped wherever a man may be, but with him comes the corollary of the "every-where-ness" of Jahveh.

Am I a God near by and not a God far off ?  
 Can a man hide himself in secret places and I not see him ?  
*Do not I fill Heaven and Earth ?*

(Jer. xxiii. 23, 24.)

A later post-exilic writer (Second Isaiah) takes up Jeremiah's latter thought and still further develops it—

Thus saith Jahveh, Heaven is my throne,\*  
 And the earth my footstool,

and then proceeds to link this on to the conception of Jahveh as Creator of the Universe, which should imply His omnipresence though not necessarily His universal accessibility ; and he further connects, or rather contrasts, it with the idea of a local habitation of such a God as Jahveh :

What manner of house is it that ye would build for me ?  
 At what manner of place is my habitation ?  
 All these my hand hath made,  
 And all these are mine, is Jahveh's oracle.

(Is. lxvi. 1, 2 a)

\* Cf. Ps. xi. 4.



There is a curious attempt as it were to answer such a question as this, or at least to harmonise the doctrine of the universal presence of Jahveh with the belief that His presence was also somehow localised at the Temple. It is a compromise but shows how nearly the former belief ousted the latter altogether. The Jews, however, clung to the latter belief at all costs.

But will God in very deed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee, how much less this house, which I have builded . . . May Thine eyes be open towards this house day and night, even towards the place whereof Thou said *My Name* shall be there; to hearken unto the prayer which Thy servant shall pray towards this place, . . . When they pray towards this place, yea, hear Thou *in heaven* Thy dwelling place, and when Thou hearest forgive.\*

(1 Kings, viii. 27, 30b. cf. also v. 48.)

Perhaps the fullest expression of belief in the universality of Jahveh's presence is to be found in Ps. cxxxix, one of the latest of the Psalms. It is clearly suggested by the Amos passage both in thought and imagery. But while the words of the Psalmist are less original, they go far beyond the thoughts of Amos, for they are written in the light of a wider and fuller experience of God, and the thought of that besetting presence of God which cannot be eluded has with the Psalmist been transformed from

\* The words are put into the mouth of Solomon in his prayer at the Dedication of the Temple, but they were actually composed as late as the Exile.

a terror to a subject of glad comfort and reverent exultation.

Thou hast beset me behind and before;  
Upon me thou hast laid thy hand. . . .  
Whither shall I go from thy spirit?  
Or whither shall I flee from thy presence?  
If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there:  
If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, thou art there.  
If I take the wings of the morning,  
And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea;  
Even there shall thy hand lead me,  
And thy right hand shall hold me.

(Ps. cxxxix. 5, 7-10.)

#### B.—FROM THE LAND OF THE LIVING TO THE REGIONS BEYOND.

A curious conception of the restriction of the sphere of Jahveh's presence and activities which persisted far longer than the idea that He was *territorially* limited is to be found in most Old Testament references to the abode of the Dead.

There was amongst the Hebrews no categorical denial of any kind of existence for anyone after death, no assertion of annihilation. There was rather a vague and misty notion that some part of a man's being lived on or rather continued to exist in a place usually designated as Sheol, that the dead continued there as bloodless, *i.e.* lifeless, shadows of their former selves for an undefined age, simply existing and cut off from all relations with the upper world or with Jahveh.

A conception of paradise or heaven as the abode of the blessed dead, so far as the Old Testament shows us, simply did not exist, though there was some kind of idea, perhaps a somewhat later development, that the very wicked had an especially low place in Sheol, called Abaddon.

Sheol was believed by the Hebrews, as by the other Semitic races, to be a region situated under the earth, the earth of course being thought of as flat. The common Semitic idea was that the Universe was divided into three spheres—Heaven the abode of the gods, Earth the abode of Mankind, and “under the earth” or Sheol the abode of the Dead.\* In the Babylonian Pantheon the various gods and goddesses had their several spheres allotted to them; some belonged to heaven, some to earth, some to Sheol. Each god was supposed to be limited to its own particular sphere. Especially was this the case with regard to the lower world. The gods of living men were debarred from any interference with the abode of the dead, they were jealously shut out from it. Ishtar the goddess of Love is an exception that clearly proves the rule. She was once admitted to Sheol:

The house from which he who enters never returns;  
The house where he who enters is deprived of light;  
Where dust is their sustenance, their food clay,  
Light they see not. In darkness do they sit,  
Where over door and bolt is spread the Dust.†

\* Cf. St. Paul's phrase “Things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth.” Phil. ii. 10.

† Ishtar's Descent into Sheol cf. Rogers, *op. cit.* p. 122. Cf. Job x. 21.

As Ishtar penetrated further and further in, she was gradually stripped of everything. For in Sheol she had neither power nor authority. Meanwhile on earth during her absence her rule automatically ceased, and none were subject to her.

Similar ideas held good throughout the Semitic world and in essence were shared, apparently without question, by the Hebrews. It was taken for granted by them that Jahveh's sphere of influence, much more His presence, did not extend to Sheol.\* Even when they had arrived at the belief in His universal accessibility and presence, they instinctively thought of them as limited to earth and heaven.

These conceptions seem to have been normal even amongst prophets and psalmists. They took for granted that, after death, when Sheol had claimed its own, there could be no more connection with Jahveh. That was over once and for all. The dwellers among the inhabitants of the lower world were cut off from His presence and His loving-kindness.

- (a) Return, O Lord, deliver my soul ;  
 Save me for Thy lovingkindness sake,  
 For in death *there is no remembrance of Thee* :  
 In Sheol who shall give Thee thanks ?  
(Ps. vi. 4f.)
- (b) Incline Thine ear unto my cry ;  
 For my soul is full of troubles ;  
 And my life draweth nigh unto Sheol.  
 I am counted with them that go down to the Pit,  
 Cast away among the dead  
 Like the slain that lie in the grave,

\* The statement in Amos ix. 1 is almost certainly rhetorical and not intended literally.

*Whom Thou rememberest no more ;  
 And they are cut off from Thy hand.  
 Wilt Thou show wonders to the dead ?  
 Shall the Shades arise and praise Thee ?  
 Shall Thy lovingkindness be declared in the grave,  
 Or Thy faithfulness in Abaddon ?*

(Ps. lxxxviii, 2-5, 10, 11.)

No wonder the godly entreated Jahveh to save them from the grave and to put death off as far as possible !

No one could be exempt from this fate.

What man is he that shall live and not see death ?  
 That shall deliver his soul from the power of Sheol ?  
 (Ps. lxxxix. 48.)

Furthermore there was no hope that anyone who had once been delivered to the power of Sheol might escape.

For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will  
 sprout again . . .  
 But man dieth and lieth low,  
 Yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he ?  
 Till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake,  
 Nor be roused out of sleep.  
 If man, too, might die and live again,  
 All the days of my appointed time would I wait,  
 Till my release should come.

(Job xiv. 7, 10, 12, 14.)

So said Job, taking it for granted that his longing that Sheol might not be the end of everything for him was in the nature of things quite impossible of realisation.

Only in a very few cases in the Old Testament are there signs of the breaking through of this limitation, existing in men's minds, to Jahveh's relations with men and to the universality of His presence and power in the whole universe as then conceived.

Yet a breaking through there was, which, tentative and hesitating though it seemed, proved to be pioneer work in the direction of causing the vast kingdom of departed souls to be recognised as also belonging to the universal empire of Jahveh.

The most significant of the instances in question may be found in Pss. xlix. 15 ; lxxiii. 24, and xvi. 10, 11.\*

But God shall redeem my soul from the power of Sheol when it (*i.e.* Sheol) taketh me.

(Ps. xlix. 15.)

Or, as it may be rendered,

For He (*i.e.*, Jahveh) shall take me.

The words occur in a Psalm, the theme of which is that all men alike are as the beasts that perish, and that death is the inevitable lot of everyone rich and poor, wise and foolish, alike. The sentence may mean merely that "God will ransom the writer from death, even when he is being received, as it were, by the grave." Death will overtake others, the brutish and wicked and so forth, but he will be spared. That is the construction put upon the passage by most moderns.

But another explanation is possible. If we accept the alternative rendering "he shall take me," there may perhaps be a reference here to the old legend about Enoch who walked with God and was not, because God *took* him. Enoch and Elijah are the only two men of whom it is recorded in the Old Testament that they escaped death. God *took*

\* Others that may be mentioned are Job xix. 25-27 (see page 127) and Ps. xvii. 15.



them both, and according to the stories they never went to Sheol at all.

Here, then, we have perhaps someone who also had walked with God, to whom had come the thought that what had happened in one case might happen in another, and that there might be, indeed had been, a few exceptions to the great rule that Sheol and the grave claim all men, great and small, wise and foolish, wicked and good.

The thought is, it is true, contrary to the whole tenor of the Psalm, but it may be a gloss (as is suspected on other grounds also), which has been written in the margin of the Psalm, by someone, who by a mighty effort of faith or sudden illumination, or perhaps by both, saw further and deeper than the writer of the original psalm. It is a strange hope bordering almost on absurdity that one should escape death altogether, and that somehow God would take one to Him alive. Yet he who wrote it, in feeling after and into the truth of God, had almost reached the glorious truth of immortality,—or shall we say that he laid hold of something better of which immortality is but a necessary corollary?

In Psalm lxxiii. also it may be that we have someone who has caught a glimpse of the possibility of life beyond for those who fear Jahveh in this life. Here again the interpretation and translation of the passage are uncertain.

23 Nevertheless, I am continually with thee:  
Thou hast holden my right hand.

24 Thou shalt guide me by thy counsel,  
And afterwards receive (take) me into glory  
(gloriously).

This might merely mean "thou wilt honour and glorify me at some future time," the psalmist coming to think that as the latter end of the prosperous wicked will be calamity and dishonour, so his own latter end will on the other hand be glory and honour. This conception fits in quite well with the argument of the Psalm.

And yet the phrase is an unusual one, and one cannot help feeling that the satisfactory attainment of earthly honour and glory or even of a peaceful and honoured death-bed, is rather a sudden descent from the exalted sense of communion with God, which had just been expressed in the words—

Nevertheless I am with thee continually:  
Thou holdest my hand.

It really fits in better to take it that the Psalmist in his realisation of the joy of the presence of God had found it impossible to limit it to this life only, and that he too hazards the suggestion that God might "take" him as he "took" Enoch. The sense of fellowship with God had overflowed into the afterward, obliterating the usual limitations of death and Sheol. There is no reasoned doctrine here, nothing but a glorious glimpse into eternity.

In Psalm xvi. we are more nearly sure than elsewhere that we are with someone who is well on the road in the right direction:

- 8 I have set the Lord always before me;  
Because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.  
10 For thou wilt not leave my soul (*i.e.* me) to Sheol,  
Thou wilt not suffer thy pious (loyal) one to see the  
Pit (R.V. Corruption).

Thou wilt make known to me the path of life.  
 Fulness of gladness is in thy presence,  
 Loveliness is on thy right hand forever.

As in the other passage, the interpretation is not certain. It may merely mean the assurance that Jahveh will save his life and will not abandon him to death. The path of life would then refer to this life. But this is not really satisfactory. What seems more likely is that the writer expects to die and go to Sheol, but he cannot believe Sheol is out of Jahveh's reach or that Jahveh will leave him even there. Even in Sheol he will be shown the way to the presence of Jahveh (the path of life), and the presence of Jahveh is to him the fulness of gladness and desirable above all else.

Here again we find that the Psalmist has gone along the same road trodden by the last two. Communion with God in this life was the way by which he reached assurance as to death and afterward. He too knew nothing of heaven, probably nothing about resurrection from the dead. But he had reached that point when, having once tasted of the presence of God, he could not believe that even Sheol could bring his experience of it to an end. In effect he had almost anticipated St. Paul when he said,

I am persuaded that neither death . . . nor  
 things to come . . . nor depth . . . shall be  
 able to separate us from the love of God.

(Rom. viii. 38, 39.)

There are three other passages, all very late,\* which show that before our Old Testament was quite

\* None of them probably earlier than the second century B.C.

completed the conception of some kind of resurrection from the dead had come into being.

- (a) Thy dead shall live, my dead bodies shall arise.  
Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust.\*

(Is. xxvi. 19.)

- (b) And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth, shall awake, some to everlasting life and some to shame and everlasting contempt. (Dan. xii. 2.)

- (c) He hath swallowed up Death forever:

And the Lord Jahveh will wipe away tears from all faces. (Is. xxv. 8.)

A hope such as this, however it may have been arrived at, implies that the realm of the dead was no longer looked upon as excluded from the sphere of Jahveh's sovereign power and might. In other words it shows that by this time it was realised, at least in the circle from which these writings emanated, that Jahveh's universality is not limited by death any more than by territorial boundaries.

### C.—FROM THE TRIBAL TO THE UNIVERSAL.

The universality of God is not merely to be conceived of spatially. It goes even deeper, it must be considered ethically. It is possible to conceive of a being who pervades the universe and yet whose interest is restricted and limited to a select few, even as in the human sphere it is possible for a man to be a world-wide traveller and yet be narrow-minded and narrow-hearted.

\* This is held by many scholars to be a poetical reference to the hope of a political resurrection for the Jews. Verse 14 in the same chapter curiously enough says the exact opposite *viz.*, the dead shall not live again, the shades shall not rise.

The current belief of the Early Hebrews, like that of other Semitic nations, was that the interests of their God were bound up with the interests of the their nation, especially perhaps with their political interests. He was their God, and they were His people, whom He was bound to protect and favour, and on whose side He was sure to range Himself when the interest of any other nation conflicted with theirs. Insofar as a God could be looked upon as the property of His worshippers, Jahveh was looked upon as the exclusive property of Israel. They believed they had the sole monopoly of His support and interest.

Something like this was an inevitable stage in the religious life of the nation, but a stage which in the interests of religion and revelation had to be left behind. As a matter of fact, Judaism never quite rid itself of some such conception of Jahveh's relation to His people ; and it was one of the things which our Lord (and later St. Paul) had to combat vehemently. Indeed, His opposition to the " nationalism " of the Jewish people was one of the causes which led up to His death.

Not all the prophets by any means rose above it, though most of them did much to modify it. The great pioneer of the struggle against this " national " or " tribal " view of God was Amos. There can be little doubt that he was not a man who had lived all his life in a little corner of Palestine out of touch with the rest of the world. Probably he had travelled about in one country or another, and he had kept his eyes and his ears open. His outlook on the nations



is never parochial, and his conception of God is not parochial either. He saw clearly into the great fact that even as Righteousness is a thing which transcends tribal and national bounds and must needs have some kind of recognition in every nation, so also Jahveh transcends tribal and national bounds. Israel was not in his eyes the only nation which belonged to Jahveh.

Are ye not as the Cushites (Ethiopians) to me, O Israel?  
 Did I not bring up Israel out of the land of Egypt  
 And the Philistines from Caphtor (Crete)  
 And Aram (Syria) from Kir (Armenia ?) ? (Amos ix. 7, 8.)

Amos in those words seems to put Israel on a level, in the eyes of Jahveh, with the far off Ethiopians, the remotest nation of those that had come into his ken, and also with "the Philistines and the Syrians" the two chief foes of Israel (and therefore according to the tribal theory of God, the two chief foes of Jahveh). With regard to these latter he is actually suggesting that even as Jahveh had brought Israel from Egypt to the promised land, which to them was the greatest proof that He was their champion and theirs alone, so also had He guided these two alien and hostile peoples to the lands which they now inhabited. In other words, Amos had recognised that Jahveh was not the God of Israel alone but of each of the other nations, and that their concerns were His concerns too, and that He guided their movements even though they might not be aware of it.

The clearest utterance of this new teaching and its consequences for Israel is in a *poem*, which is



preserved in Amos i. 3-iii. 2, where the prophet tells of judgment which was soon to overtake the nations neighbouring to Israel, and that not because of their hostility to Israel in particular but because of their various offences against what was universally recognised as right conduct. Damascus and Gaza, (Tyre\*), (Edom\*), Ammon, Moab (and Judah\*) pass in rapid review before the prophet, and the sentence of condemnation and punishment is given in the self-same terms to each, much, doubtless, to the satisfaction of the listening Israelites. "Thus saith Jahveh, for three transgressions of Damascus, yea for four, I will not turn it (the punishment) back because—" and then follows the statement of the particular crime. But to the astonishment and chagrin of the North Israelites, when their four rivals had been satisfactorily condemned, the same doom was pronounced against themselves for the self-same reasons, even though Jahveh was their own special God and had championed them in times past.

But hear this word which Jahveh has spoken against you, O Israelites, against the whole race that I brought up out of the land of Egypt. You only have I known of all the races of the earth, therefore will I visit upon you all your iniquities. (Amos iii. 1, 2).

The particularistic tribal point of view almost inevitably carried with it the belief that Jahveh would act towards His own nation more leniently than towards the other nations. Amos was apparently the first to see that Jahveh was no respecter

\* The passages dealing with Tyre, Edom and Judah are probably later additions than the original poem.

of persons nor yet of nations, and that if He had given to Israel special privileges in that they alone had known Him, their punishment must in fairness to the other " races of the earth " be proportionally heavier. Amos was enabled to see Jahveh as a God who was equally fair to all the nations of the earth in His moral judgments and condemnations, as One who treated all alike. None of the later prophets stated the case against the parochial view of Jahveh more forcibly or uncompromisingly than Amos. It was only to the content of this ethical universality of Jahveh that anything really needed to be added.

It is characteristic of Amos that it was the uncompromising righteousness and fairness of Jahveh which he recognised to be universal ; and that it was in the matter of judgment and doom, that he rejected the parochial and tribal view of Jahveh's dealings. Other prophets came gradually to understand that the converse was also true. For the scope of Jahveh's love and mercy as well as of His righteous judgments was gradually seen to extend in ever widening circles, till in Jesus it was perceived that none were left outside, and that in His heart was room for all the world. This gradual apprehension of the breadth of the love of God and realisation of the universal scope of His gracious purposes, though an integral part of the study of the Universality of God, must be reserved for separate treatment later on.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD

#### A.—THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD.

The realisation of the fact that Jahveh was a righteous God is to be seen in several ways, especially in the insistent teaching of the prophets: (1) that He demanded Righteousness from His people; (2) that He persistently endeavoured to make His people righteous; (3) that His own dealings with His people were based on Righteousness.

##### 1. *Jahveh's demand for righteousness from His people.*

In the forefront of the teaching of the prophets from Amos onwards as we have already seen was the fact that Jahveh's primary demand from His people was righteousness, especially social righteousness. All the greater prophets recognised this fully, and bent all their energies to impress it on the people. The obligations of worship, they taught, at all events of the externalities of worship, were as nothing besides this supreme obligation. Without this righteousness nothing was acceptable to Jahveh. The magnitude of the break with the current non-ethical, non-moral and often immoral conceptions of

religion is hard to realise. The religion of Jahveh, according to the prophets was primarily moral,—a religion concerned with right and wrong conduct. They recognised that Jahveh's covenant with His people was on a moral basis and that loyalty and allegiance to Him consisted mainly in the conserving of righteousness and justice, mercy and truth in their midst.

“Away with your ceremonies and sacrifices,” says Amos, “but let justice roll down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream” (Amos v. 24). And again “thus” saith Jahveh, “For three transgressions, yea, for four, I will not turn away their punishment, because they have sold the righteous for silver and the needy for a pair of shoes, and pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor and turn aside the way of the meek” (Amos ii. 6). “When ye spread forth your hands” is Isaiah’s message, “I (Jahveh) will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers I will not hear, your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do well; seek justice, release the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow” (Is. i. 15-17). “Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil . . . Woe unto them that justify the wicked for reward. . . Therefore is the anger of Jahveh kindled” (Is. v. 20, 23, 25). “He (Jahveh) looked for justice, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry” (Is. v. 7). It is not necessary to multiply examples. Jahveh, according to these prophets and

most of the others, is a God of Righteousness in the sense that His chief desire is to find righteousness in the life and conduct of His people, and that above all things He hates and detests to find unrighteousness and injustice practised by them.

Amos, as we have seen, further showed that these moral requirements of Jahveh were not confined to the narrow limits of Israel but extended even to other nations as well. In short he believed and taught that Jahveh always upheld the moral order of the universe, the moral order which is universally recognised in the hearts and consciences of men.

There is in Amos and Isaiah no appeal to any written Code of Laws as the standard of righteousness. Their appeal was rather to men's moral sense and to the promptings of their higher natures, and their message was practically that Jahveh's requirements were in accord with these, and that to act contrary to these was to sin against Jahveh as the God of Righteousness. These prophets also did much to quicken and educate men's consciences, mainly perhaps by helping them to see the heinousness of tampering in conduct with their innate sense of right and wrong. The Book of Deuteronomy and also the Holiness Code (Lev. xvii-xxvi.) did not a little towards educating the conscience of the nation by setting forth clearly and precisely a remarkably high standard of conduct and life, which was largely based on prophetic teaching, and gave to the ordinary man some idea of what righteousness not only could mean but ought to mean for himself as a worshipper of Jahveh. The precepts as to righteous conduct in



both books are written as if they were the direct commands of Jahveh word for word, with the promises of Jahveh's blessing and approval if they are complied with and the threat of His anger and punishment if they are disobeyed. One or two of the commands may be cited to show how high a standard of righteousness was reached.

This to judges :

Thou shalt not wrest judgment ; thou shalt not respect persons ; neither shalt thou take a gift, for a gift doth blind the eye of the wise and pervert the cause of the righteous. Justice, justice shalt thou follow (Deut. xvi. 19, 20).

To all men :

Thou shalt not see thy brother's ass or his ox fallen down by the way and hide thyself from them : thou shalt surely help him to lift them up again (Deut. xxii. 4). When thou reapest thine harvest in thy field, and hast forgot a sheaf in the field, thou shalt not go again to fetch it ; it shall be for the stranger and the fatherless and the widow ; that Jahveh, thy God, may bless thee and all the works of thine hands (Deut. xxiv. 19).

Thou shalt not oppress an hired servant that is poor and needy. . . . in his day thou shalt give him his hire . . . for he is poor and setteth his heart upon it ; lest he cry against thee unto Jahveh, and it be *sin* unto thee (Deut. xxiv. 14).

But the crown and summary of all is in the Holiness code,—“ Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself ; I am Jahveh ” (Lev. xix. 18), and the less known, though in some ways as wonderful, application of the same thought : “ the stranger that sojourneth with you shall be unto you, as the



home-born among you and thou shalt love him as thyself, for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt : I am Jahveh, your God " (Lev. xix. 34).

Along with these splendid practical instances of the kind of righteous dealing which Jahveh required were other commands which are on a much lower level, though many of them showed an advance on current practices. There were also many regulations and ordinances which were purely civil or ceremonial and were not directly connected with morality and righteousness. Unfortunately, in the endeavour to regulate the life of the community on the lines laid down in these codes, the codes themselves in their entirety with their mixture of ethical and ceremonial, and of higher and lower morality, came to be taken as the verbally inspired and literal statement of Jahveh's commands to His people, and the righteousness which He required was thought to consist in the *literal* fulfilment of the contents, ceremonial, civil and ethical alike of these law books. It was the superficial legalism which ensued and the consequent pious juggling with the letter of the law, which our Lord had later to combat and from which He had to set men free. The righteousness which God looks for is a deeper and higher thing than obedience to any written code. It is obedience to the highest, even if that should chance to conflict with literal adherence to the best of written codes. The truest righteousness does not lie in submission to any external authority, however lofty its credentials, but in free obedience to that which is recognised by heart and conscience to be highest and best. This the messages of the

greater pre-exilic prophets imply, though they do not state it explicitly.

It is remarkable that though many passages in Deuteronomy give one quite the opposite impression, yet the book contains a passage stating very simply this higher view of righteousness required by Jahveh.\*

For this commandment, which I command thee this day, is not too hard for thee, neither is it far off. It is not in Heaven that thou shouldest say, who shall go up for us to heaven and bring it unto us, and make us to hear it that we may do it. Neither is it beyond the sea . . . But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart that thou mayest do it† (Deut. xxx. 11-14).

We find, then, that the loftiest prophetic teaching was that it was *righteousness* which Jahveh demanded from His people, and that this righteousness was chiefly conceived of as life lived in accordance with the moral order, which is revealed in the hearts and consciences of men and there instinctively approved.

## 2. *Jahveh's endeavours to make His people righteous.*

But Jahveh was shown to be a God of Righteousness, not only by the fact that He demanded righteousness, but by the further fact that He used every means to build up His people in righteousness.

"What," Isaiah represents Jahveh as saying, "What could have been done more to my vineyard

\* The passage came from the pen of one of the later Deuteronomic writers.

† Cf. also Jer. xxxi. 33. "I will put my law in their inward parts and in their heart will I write it."

that I have not done in it? I looked that it should bring forth grapes . . . He looked for justice . . . for righteousness" (Is. v. 4, 7).

The purposes which He was working out were mainly towards that end. Through His prophets He strove to lead and woo His people to love goodness and to turn from evil ways. If He sent calamities upon them, it was that they might learn to keep His commandments.\* The prophets showed Jahveh to be engaged in a moral warfare, combating wickedness wherever He found it, but more than that, as Hosea shows (cf. chapter xi.), fighting a hard battle, grievous to Himself, with the sin and unrighteousness in the heart of His beloved people. All this presupposes that Jahveh was Himself a Being in whom righteousness was a fundamental attribute.†

### 3. *The Righteousness of Jahveh's Character and of His dealings.*

In addition to these implicit indications that Jahveh was held to be a righteous being by the prophets and saints of the Old Testament, explicit reference is also made continually to the fact of His own personal righteousness. It is His most prominent moral attribute in the descriptions of Him found in both Psalmist and Prophet.

✓ The Rock, his work is perfect :  
For all his ways are *judgment (just)* :  
A God of faithfulness and without iniquity,  
*Righteous and upright* is He. (Deut. xxxii. 4.)

\* Deut. viii. 2, 3, 5, 6.

† Cf. Skinner, *Hastings' Bible Dictionary* IV., p. 274.

Judge me, O God, according to thy righteousness.

(Ps. xxxv. 24.)

My tongue shall talk of thy *righteousness*

And of thy praise all the day long.

(Ps. xxxv. 28.)

Thy *righteousness* is like the mountains.

(Ps. xxxvi. 6.)

Thy right hand is full of *righteousness*.

(Ps. xlviii. 10.)

I am Jahveh, who exercise lovingkindness, *judgment and righteousness* in the earth, for in these things I delight.

(Jer. ix. 24.)

We find that Righteousness was recognised to be an essential element in the divine being.

Righteousness and justice are the foundations of thy throne:

Mercy and truth go before thy face.

(Ps. lxxxix. 14.)

This righteousness appears to be regarded, not as a natural attribute, inseparable from the very notion of Godhead, but as one which Jahveh alone has proved Himself to possess in the positive revelation of Himself through the history of Israel. (Cf. Is. xlv. 19-24.)\*

## B.—THE QUALITY OF THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD.

Apart from the general sense of righteousness, as being the direct opposite of wickedness, three ways in particular may be mentioned in which Jahveh was thought of as righteous.

\* Cf. Skinner, *Hastings' Bible Dictionary IV.*, p. 278.

### 1. *Righteousness as Faithfulness.*

Jahveh's righteousness implied His unswerving  
adhesion to right in all that He said and did. He  
 was not such an one as could be moved by wayward  
 humours as were the gods of the heathen; hence His  
 promises were altogether reliable, and He Himself  
 was ever the same. His promises were nevertheless  
 always contingent on the attitude of those to whom  
 the promises were made, never on His changing  
 moods, He changed not. It depended on men  
whether they made it possible for Him to fulfil His  
promises to them or not. The full implications of  
 Jahveh's faithfulness and unchangeableness were,  
 however, never quite realised by the people of Israel,  
 as witness, *e.g.* their retention of sacrifices which were  
 at bottom an attempt to work a change on God, and  
 even many of their prayers of which the same may be  
 said. Jeremiah perhaps alone among the prophets  
 realised that even prayer, fervent and agonising  
 prayer, could not make Jahveh a whit more merciful  
 and gracious than He was, nor, on the other hand,  
 could it render the working out of His righteous anger  
 against sin a whit less inevitable. (See especially  
 Jer. xiv. 2-xv. 6.)

Jahveh as righteous was thought of as absolutely  
 dependable and trustworthy. His "faithfulness"  
 was unto all generations (Ps. cxix. 90); He was  
 "a very present help in time of trouble." None of  
 those who trusted in Him would be put to shame.

This faithfulness or steadfastness of Jahveh is  
 not identical with Jahveh's righteousness, but is a



constant element of it. It is, however, frequently spoken of as if it were very much the same thing.

In Thy faithfulness answer me, and in Thy righteousness (Ps. cxliii. 1. cf. Ps. xl. 10).

It is true that this side of Jahveh's character was challenged more than once. This was because righteousness was thought by not a few of the Hebrews to mean God's fidelity to His covenant. His withdrawal of His protection from Israel appeared like unfaithfulness, partly because the old tribal view of Jahveh's obligations had not yet broken down, partly because it was not yet fully realised that the calamities which befell Israel at the time of the exile did not mean that He had either forsaken or failed His people.

Ps. lxxxix. represents the fear that Jahveh had proved unrighteous and unfaithful to His covenant, in this case, the covenant in particular with the house of David. Vv. 19-45 onwards remind Jahveh of His promises, and challenge Him as having failed to abide by them.

Thou didst say

- 33 My mercy will I not utterly take from him,  
Nor suffer my faithfulness to fail.
- 34 My covenant will I not break,  
Nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips.
- 38 But thou hast cast off and rejected,  
Thou hast been wroth with thine anointed.
- 39 Thou hast abhorred the covenant of thy servant:  
Thou hast profaned his crown\* even to the ground.

\* *i.e.* probably Jehoiachin's.



The first portion (vv. 1-18) of the present Psalm is in strong contrast and was added in later days when the darkness had passed away and Jahveh had proved Himself to be steadfast and true after all. It is a Psalm in praise of the faithfulness of Jahveh !

With my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations . . .

Thy faithfulness wilt thou establish in the very heavens. . .

Righteousness and justice are the foundations of thy throne:

Mercy and truth go before thy face.

(Ps. lxxxix. 1, 2, 14.)

## 2. *Righteousness as Love.*

Jahveh's righteousness was closely akin to love and mercy. It is a striking fact that in the Old Testament the righteousness and mercy of God are never opposed to one another or even contrasted with one another. Because He is righteous, Jahveh is merciful, especially in the sense that He is the champion of the oppressed and of the weak and helpless (*e.g.* Ps. cxlvi. 7-9). The widow and the orphan are His especial care. His also it is to adjust the inequalities of this life (*cf.* 1 Sam. ii. 5-8). Even in the exercise of His just wrath "He loveth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he may turn from his wickedness and live." (*Cf.* Ezek. xxxiii. 11.)

Because He is righteous Jahveh will make allowances for extenuating circumstances, will judge men fairly and charitably, as it were in equity, and not according to the cast-iron technicalities of law.

Jahveh executeth righteous acts

And judgment for all that are oppressed . . .

He hath not dealt with us after our sins:

Nor rewarded us after our iniquities . . .  
 For He knoweth our frame:  
 He remembereth that we are dust . . .  
 But the mercy of Jahveh is from everlasting to ever-  
 lasting upon them that fear Him,  
 And His righteousness unto children's children.

(Ps. ciii. 6, 10, 14, 17.)

The Psalms abound in the conjunction of the two thoughts of Jahveh's righteousness and loving-kindness, as if the one naturally suggested the other.

Jahveh is righteous in all His ways  
 And gracious in all His works.

(Ps. cxlv. 17.)

So much so is this the case that in some places the righteousness of God practically means His merciful readiness to succour and save.

Deliver me in thy righteousness and rescue me . . .  
 My mouth will tell of thy righteousness,  
 And of thy salvation all the day.

(Ps. lxxi. 2, 15.)

### 3. *Righteousness as Justice.*

But by far the most characteristic and important element in the conception of the righteousness of Jahveh was the thought of His justice. This came more particularly to the front as Jahveh came to be considered less as the champion of His people and more as their judge. Righteousness is in fact primarily the judicial attribute of God as conceived in the Old Testament. It will be necessary, therefore, to examine this aspect of Jahveh's character at considerable length.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE JUSTICE OF GOD

#### A.—RETRIBUTION AND REWARD.

##### 1. *According to Works and Impartial.*

The first clearly marked upward stage in the beliefs of the Israelites as to the doctrine of the righteousness and justice of Jahveh is found in the realisation by the prophets that Jahveh demanded righteous conduct, and, furthermore, that faithfulness to His behests would be rewarded by tokens of His favour, while disobedience to His commands and disloyalty to Himself would meet with due punishment. There are two points to be noticed in this connection: (1) that Jahveh would reward the nation according to its works, blessings for righteousness, curses for wickedness; (2) that He would deal impartially with the nation and would show it no special indulgence because it was His own particular people.

(1) The first point is very clearly and uncompromisingly set forth in Deuteronomy and elsewhere.

It recurs throughout the book but is most emphatically stated in chapter xxviii.

All these blessings shall come upon thee and overtake thee if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of Jahveh thy God. Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed shalt thou be in the field. Blessed shall be the fruit of thy body and the fruit of thy ground and the fruit of thy cattle . . . Blessed shall be thy basket and thy kneading trough. Blessed shalt thou be when thou comest in and when thou goest out. Jahveh shall cause thine enemies that rise against thee to be smitten before thee. . . . But . . . if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of Jahveh thy God to observe to do all His commandments . . . all these curses shall come upon thee and overtake thee. Cursed shalt thou be in the city, and cursed shalt thou be in the field. Cursed shall be thy basket, etc. Jahveh shall send upon thee cursing, discomfiture and rebuke. . . . Jahveh shall make the pestilence cleave unto thee. . . . Jahveh shall smite thee with fiery heat, with drought, and with blasting and with mildew. . . . Jahveh shall smite thee with the boil of Egypt and with the emerods and with the scurvy and with the itch (Deut. xxviii. 1-27).

It should be noted (a) that this teaching refers primarily to national wickedness or goodness as the case might be, (b) that the punishments and rewards for the most part consist in material adversity or prosperity.

(2) The second point we have already noticed as prominent in the teaching of pre-exilic prophets, especially of Amos, who portrayed Jahveh as the righteous judge of nations, in particular of the Hebrew nation, a judge that would by no means clear the guilty, though they were as His own child, a

judge who would in no way deal arbitrarily or capriciously, but who could be absolutely depended on to act in accordance with true justice.

So far as one can judge, the prophets came to their belief that Jahveh would surely bring such just retribution to pass because they had first come to realise that Jahveh was absolutely just and righteous. Later on these factors in men's faith came rather in the reverse order, and their belief in Jahveh as a just and righteous God, indeed, their belief in a moral government of the universe, was in no small degree conditioned by the extent to which they were able to see that laws of just retribution were actually at work among mankind. Men's hold on the moral issues of life in not a few cases came to depend, at least so it seemed to them, on their being able to explain in some way satisfactory to themselves the apparent failures of retributive justice in the world. Anything in the nature of sceptical atheism that is referred to in the Old Testament is usually based almost directly on disbelief in this retributive justice of Jahveh.

Ye have wearied Jahveh with your words. Yet ye say, wherein have we wearied Him ? In that ye say, Everyone that doeth evil is good in the sight of Jahveh and He delighteth in them ; or, Where is the God of Judgment ? (Mal. ii. 17). Ye have said, it is vain to serve God, and what profit is it that we have kept His charge ? . . . And now we call the proud happy ; yea, they that work wickedness are built up (Mal. iii. 14, 15). But in the day that I take action, saith Jahveh, ye shall return and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth Him not (Mal. iii. 17, 18).

The wicked in the pride of his countenance saith, He will not require it (*i.e.*, exact the penalty of wickedness). All his thoughts are, There is no God (Ps. x. 4).\*

## 2. *Retribution and Reward—for Individuals as well as for Communities.*

Another great stage was reached when the individual came to be considered apart from the community. We find in Deuteronomy that the ancient form of justice which indiscriminately punished the family of a criminal along with himself† had been recognised as unfair:

The father shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers, every man shall be put to death for his own sin (Deut, xxiv. 16).

It was keenly felt during the exile that though the judgment which fell upon the nation was only too well deserved and was a proof of the justice and righteousness of Jahveh, yet many of the people of the nation who had shared in the penalty were innocent of the sin. More particularly was this felt by the younger generations that grew up among the exiles in Babylon.

Ezekiel dealt with the problem (in chapters xviii. and xxxiii.), and though he did not explain how it

\* For this rendering and its justification, see Kirkpatrick *The Psalms*, p. 52. The denial is not of the existence of God, but of the fact that God is such an one that He can and will punish wickedness.

† *Vide* Joshua vii. 24 and *cf.* the vendettas of Sicily and Corsica of modern times.



could be in accordance with the justice of Jahveh that the innocent should thus be suffering with the guilty, he taught that Jahveh was so just that each individual in His eyes was responsible for no one's sin but his own. And further than that, he declared that it was a man's present actions and not his past deeds which determined Jahveh's attitude to him.

This word of Jahveh came to me, What mean ye, by saying this proverb . . . the fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge! As I live, saith Jahveh, never again shall ye use this proverb in Israel. Behold, all souls are mine—the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is mine. The person who sins, he alone shall die. . . . If a son execute justice and righteousness, keep all my statutes to do them, he shall surely live. It is the person who sins who shall die. A son shall not bear his father's iniquity, and a father shall not bear his son's iniquity. The righteousness of the righteous shall be to *his credit* and the wickedness of the wicked to his discredit. . . . When a righteous man turns from his righteousness and does iniquity, for the iniquity he has done he shall die. But if a wicked man turn from the wickedness which he has done and do justice and righteousness, he shall save his life. . . . Ye, the house of Israel, say The way of Jahveh is not right. Is not my way right, O house of Israel? Is it not your ways that are not right? Therefore, O house of Israel, I judge *each of you* according to his ways (Ezek. xviii. 1-4, 19, 20, 26-30).

### 3. *Retribution and Reward—Problems of Apparent Injustice.*

Another kindred problem that came to press heavily first became vocal about the time of the Exile,—the problem of the prosperity of the wicked.

It is to be noticed that it occurs in connection with the happenings within the nation, where innocent and righteous persons suffered at the hands of wicked men on whom fortune seemed to smile. And it is further important to observe that these innocent persons were sometimes suffering for righteousness sake.

Jeremiah says,

Jahveh, thou *righteous judge*, who testeth the heart and mind. I shall see thy vengeance on them [the wicked oppressors] . . . Thou art too righteous, Jahveh, for me to contend with thee; why do the wicked prosper? Why are they at ease that deal very treacherously? (Jer. xi. 20; xii. 1).

And Habakkuk, his contemporary, voices the same difficulty, though with the same initial faith in the inherent justice of Jahveh:

The wicked encompass the righteous so that justice is perverted. Art thou not of old, O Jahveh my God, my Holy one with eyes too pure to behold evil? . . . Why doest thou gaze upon them that deal treacherously? Why art thou silent when the wicked swallow him that is more righteous than he? (Hab. i. 4, 12, 13).

From this time onwards, though the national aspect of the question was not lost sight of, yet the case of the individual member of the nation came to be the more insistent and puzzling problem. How could men still believe in the justice of God when there were innocent and righteous men who suffered adversity and wicked men who did not receive due punishment for their deeds, but were on the contrary prosperous and powerful? The orthodox

answer to the first part of the problem was that as suffering and adversity were the divine penalty for sin, those who suffered must be sinners, though they might not appear to be so. Thus the justice of God was upheld at the expense of injustice to many unfortunate individuals. Our Lord had to contend with this answer during His ministry (John ix. 1-3, Luke xiii. 5).

This question of the Divine justice is chiefly dealt with in the Psalms and in Job, while in second Isaiah a most important contribution to the subject is made in the teaching of the book as to the value and uses of suffering, especially of unmerited suffering.

## CHAPTER X

### THE JUSTICE OF GOD—(*Continued*)

#### A.—THE PROBLEM OF DIVINE JUSTICE IN THE PSALMS.

In perhaps the majority of references the whole matter seems simple enough. If a man were good he would be happy and prosperous, and things would go well with him; if he were wicked, misfortunes would overtake him, and calamities would fall upon him. Well and evil-doing—each had its own appropriate fruits in this world. Conversely it followed that if misfortunes came they were the fruit of wickedness, while prosperity was the fruit of a life lived righteously. But this further logical conclusion is not laboured in the Psalms as it is elsewhere, the psalmists as a rule being more concerned with experience than with logic.

This comfortable and simple conception of the workings of God's government of mankind, which after all is true in the main, especially if the converse is not insisted upon and plenty of apparent exceptions allowed for, is found clearly set forth in such psalms as xcii. cxii., etc. But at times we find one or other of the psalm-writers puzzled and distressed because this apparently fundamental axiom in God's

dealings with men did not apply in many cases. Prosperity came to the wicked and misfortune to the religious. And sometimes the faith of the psalmists was shaken, as well it might be; for if men were not being rewarded according to their deserts, the whole fabric of righteousness and justice in the universe seemed to be undermined, while the honour of Jahveh was in danger, since it made Him appear to be either unjust or careless or too weak to be of much use to His people. Fortunately, as I have said, none of the psalmists solved the problem along the line of the specious logic which concluded that the prosperous must be really good people, and that the unfortunate must really be wicked. The facts were altogether against it, and, besides, the psalmist was often one of the unfortunate ones himself.

There is no systematic attempt at a solution in any of the psalms; what we find rather are enquiring meditations on the problem as in the presence of God.

Ps. xxxvii. (an acrostic) is the most optimistic and perhaps superficial of these. It seems to take the form of an assurance that the problem is not really a problem, and that it has been rather overdrawn, and in the main it insists on the old half-truth that there is earthly retribution. "Fret not thyself because of evil-doers," is the key-note of the psalm, repeated over and anon.

- 1 Neither be thou envious against them that work unrighteousness.
- 2 For they will soon be cut down like the grass,  
And wither as the green herb.

The wicked are prosperous, it is true, but their prosperity *is only temporary*. It will soon pass away. This idea is repeated and developed all through the psalm (vv. 8-10, 12, 17, etc.). The writer is quite confident that the wicked will not escape his just doom here on earth; such seeming good fortune as he has is fleeting and illusory.

The sorrows and misfortunes of the righteous are treated in much the same fashion. All comes right for the righteous man, if only he will wait patiently for Jahveh's time. His misfortunes, too, are only temporary (vv. 4, 6, 9, etc.). Patience is all that is needed, and the problem will solve itself if only sufficient time is allowed. Prosperity will come in due time to the righteous and calamity to the wicked. Perhaps the bravest and most convincing statement on those lines is in verse 24,

*Though he* (the righteous) *fall, he shall not be utterly cast down,*

For Jahveh upholdeth him with his hand.

That sounds like experience, and is not cast in too material a form. It reminds one of St. Paul.

As to v. 25, when the writer brings forth triumphantly his chief argument of experience, Kautzsch hits the nail on the head when he writes, "We can only say that while there is something extremely touching and edifying in the testimony of the author of Ps. xxxvii. 25, that up to his old age he had never seen the righteous forsaken or his seed begging bread, unfortunately every one is not in a position to testify to the same experience."\*

\* Art. in *Hastings' Bible Dictionary Religion of Israel*. Vol. V., p. 727a.



One little contribution to the solution of the problem must not be overlooked. It is in v. 16, "Better is a little that the righteous hath than the abundance of many wicked." There is insight in this. Sometimes at least the inward happiness of the righteous poor counterbalances the outward prosperity of the wicked. Things, even as they are, are not always so unequal and unfair as they seem.

Among other psalms which are worth studying in this connection, and which are mainly concerned with some phase or other of this subject, are xlix., lxxvii. and lxxiii.

In Ps. xlix. the answer is that the grave equalises all things. The wicked man, be he ever so rich, cannot purchase exemption from the common lot (vv. 6, 7, and 9), nor can he take his wealth with him (10, 16, 17). A few years hence and the wicked will at least be no more prosperous than the righteous. And there is a further hint (v. 15) that for the righteous even the grave may not be the last word. The hint is vague and uncertain and must not be pressed, yet it is the germ of a great truth.

In Ps. lxxvii. the psalmist turns to the witness of history (v. 5). He describes how he recovered himself after a time of cloud and darkness (vv. 2, 4, etc.) by remembering God's mercies in ancient times (v. 11). His difficulty had not been the prosperity of the wicked but the present distress of those who feared God, especially of himself (vv. 7-9).

His backward look reassured him that all would be well. He has recognised that one half at least of

the great law of just retribution holds good, but in the case of a nation, not of an individual (vv. 13-15). Consequently he misses the biggest difficulty. Yet it is true that it is only in the history of nations that the law can be verified, the life of individuals being often too short.

The writer of Ps. lxxiii. goes deepest, probably because the difficulty has been forced upon himself; he is not merely treating it for the benefit of someone else, less wise and less experienced than himself, as in the case of the writer of Ps. xxxvii. He is very frank and very human.

- 2 My feet were almost gone; my steps were well nigh slipped.  
3 For I was envious of the arrogant,  
When I saw the prosperity of the wicked.  
4 For there are no pangs in their death:  
But their strength is firm.

(This seems hardly to tally with the testimony of the author of Ps. xxxvii.)

- 5 They are not in trouble as other men;  
Neither are they plagued as other men.

(Here manifestly there is exaggeration; the psalmist in his irritation has certainly lost his sense of perspective a little.)

- 6 Pride is as a chain about their neck;  
Violence covereth them as a garment.  
7 Their eyes stand out with fatness:  
They have more than heart can wish.  
11 They say, How doth God know?  
And is there knowledge in the Most High?  
12 Behold these are the wicked,  
And being always at ease they increase in riches.

He then contrasts his own miserable lot with that of the men who ignore God in their conduct, and live as if it were no matter what they did and how they behaved. What is the good of trying to do right? he cries despairingly.

- 13 Surely in vain have I cleansed my heart  
And washed my hands in innocency.

He means that he has kept his hands free from bribery, robbery, fraudulency, etc., which were probably the methods by which the wicked had become wealthy.

- 14 For all the day long have I been plagued  
And chastened every morning,  
15 If I had said, Let such be my discourse,  
I had been a traitor to the generation of Thy children.  
16 When I thought how I might understand this,  
It was too fearful for me,  
17 Until I went into the sanctuary of God.

In the sanctuary, as the psalmist shows, he found relief from the feeling of soreness at the apparently unfair lot meted out to him, and in a measure he seems to see the solution of the problem. But again we find that it is a little more than a re-statement of the old theory of the justice of God. The higher up the wicked man has climbed in his prosperity, the greater will be his fall (vv. 18, 19). Calamity will certainly come and all the worse for being delayed.

The explanation is, as usual, quite inadequate. What has really happened is that the psalmist,

through being in the presence of God, has become utterly ashamed of his impatience and irritation and of thinking that Jahveh could really be unfair. He has regained confidence in God apart from any rational explanation of what has been perplexing him, so any reason is good enough for him. He, as it were, apologises to Jahveh for his attitude towards Him. "For," says he, "my heart was becoming embittered, I was hurt in my feelings, I was brutish and ignorant, I was a stupid beast towards thee."

He now gives the true ground of his change of attitude. It is this:—he is again realising how precious communion with Jahveh is to him, and he virtually says, though not in so many words, "After all, I have what I value far more than all the material prosperity which I have just been envying in the wicked."

Yet I am continually with thee:  
Thou dost hold me by my right hand.  
Now with thy counsel thou guardest me,  
And afterwards unto glory [or, gloriously]  
    thou wilt take me.  
Whom have I in heaven?  
And having thee on earth I delight in none else.  
It is good for me to draw near unto God.

(vv. 23-25.)

All this is not intended for an argument, though it is worth more than a thousand arguments to the psalmist's heart and was the best practical solution he could have found. It is not theology, it is religion of the highest type.

B.—THE PROBLEM OF DIVINE JUSTICE IN JOB AND  
ISAIAH LIII.

The message of the Book of Job is somewhat to the same effect as that of Ps. lxxiii., only it is worked out more elaborately and on a grander and vaster scale. It deals particularly with the seeming injustice of God as seen in the suffering of the righteous. But it is really a magnificent vindication of the Justice of God accomplished in the process of facing the most acutely difficult case that could be imagined. We have there the picture of Job a *truly righteous man*, whom Jahveh approved (though Job of course does not know this) as one like whom "there is none in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God and escheweth evil." With the permission of Jahveh Job, in spite of his righteousness, was overwhelmed with every kind of trouble and affliction, not unlike those described in Deuteronomy as the inevitable punishment of the people of Israel if they wickedly disobeyed the commands of Jahveh as to righteous conduct.

According to the prologue Job's trials came upon him in order that his integrity might be vindicated in heavenly places, and that in his person it might be proved that human righteousness and goodness were not necessarily based on selfish motives or dependent on continuance of outward evidences of Divine favour such as happiness and prosperity, or even absence of pain and sorrow. This in itself is part of the answer to the problem. The writer presents to us a righteous



man who is permitted to suffer, not because of his "sin" but because God is working out through him certain inscrutable lofty moral purposes for the furtherance of which Job would gladly have suffered anything had he only known what God was requiring of him, but which by the very nature of things could not be known either to him or to his fellows. Job indeed suffered that he might embody the fact that goodness was not at bottom a subtle form of selfishness. If goodness were really only a form of selfishness, then goodness would be an illusion, and life would lose all moral values. If but one man could be found, however, in whose goodness there was neither selfishness nor self-seeking, one who served God for nought, not even for the comfortable knowledge of the Divine approval, then the most deadly attack on the supreme value of moral issues in life perforce would fail. The writer of the drama of Job pictures such a man. As we begin to understand the eternal issues at stake, which according to the story made the sufferings of that righteous one necessary and of untold spiritual value for mankind, perhaps for all spiritual beings akin to mankind and to God, we come to understand better certain of the reasons why it was "necessary that the Son of Man should suffer," and we enter a little into the sorrows and afflictions of Jesus, the Holy and Righteous One,\* and especially into the mystery of that awful cry on the Cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken Me?" Job is not properly a prediction of our

\* Perhaps one ought to say rather "the Righteousness of the Suffering and Afflicted One."



Lord, but this story and especially this element in it is one of the truest and deepest prophecies which prepared the way for Him.

All this aspect of the case was, according to the drama, hidden from Job and the three friends who deal with him. The three friends are represented as attempting in various ways to defend the Justice of God in thus allowing Job to suffer, and though in the course of their speeches they say many beautiful and true things about God and about suffering, yet these appear for the most part as irrelevances, for each of them has deeprooted in his mind the false premise that Job must have been sinning against God, or else these calamities would not have befallen him.

They defend the Righteousness of God at the expense of the righteousness of Job, and the Justice of God at the cost of injustice to Job. They virtually declare that as God could not be so unjust as to afflict Job, if Job had not deserved his sufferings by his sin, the possibility of Job's innocence is put out of court. When Job points to the prosperity of the wicked in disproof of their fundamental thesis that calamity is the inevitable result of wickedness and prosperity of goodness, they do not argue that the prosperous wicked must therefore be righteous—that were too absurd a thesis even for orthodoxy—but they contend like the writer of Ps. xxxvii. that this prosperity of the wicked is but temporary and that calamity will come all the more suddenly and dreadfully through being delayed (*e.g.* v. 3, 4). Job's answer to that is that a wider experience would

tell them that this is simply not true. The wicked are sometimes prosperous to the end, and the end is peaceful and enviable.

- How often is it that the lamp of the wicked is put out ?  
 . . . Have ye not asked them that travel ?  
 Do ye not know their tokens [*i.e.* concrete instances]  
 That the evil man is spared in the day of calamity ?  
 That they are led away scatheless in their day of wrath ?  
 . . . And who repays him what he has done ?  
 Yet is he borne to the grave,  
 And they shall keep watch over the tomb.  
 The clods of the valley are sweet unto him.  
 . . . How then comfort ye me with nonsense,  
 Seeing in your answers there remaineth only falsehoods ?  
 (Job. xxi. 17, 29-34.)

As to the alleged suffering of the righteous, the friends explain it away in much the same manner as they do the prosperity of the wicked. It is only temporary and in due time prosperity will be restored.

Whoever perished being innocent ?  
 (Eliphaz iv. 7.)

Behold, God will not cast away a perfect man,  
 Neither will He uphold the evildoers.  
 He will yet fill thy mouth with laughter  
 And thy tongue with shouting.

(Bildad viii. 20-21.)

Meanwhile, however, the apparently righteous suffer because they have sinned, perhaps unwittingly, against a God who is so holy that "even His angels He chargeth with folly" (iv. 18). "Can mortal men be just before God (iv. 17) " ?

No man, therefore, even an apparently righteous man like Job, has a right to complain if God sends afflictions upon him. It must be just punishment and a proof of the divine anger, but it will pass away if endured with patience and meekness.

Therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty,  
For He maketh sore and bindeth up.

(Eliphaz v. 17, 18.)

Later in the discussion, in the face of Job's rejection of all such explanations as inadequate and inaccurate, even this modification of the doctrine that suffering is divine proof of wickedness is dropped by the friends.

It is worth while mentioning here that Elihu (whose speeches are a later addition to the poem) follows up the thought that suffering may be chastisement. But he suggests that suffering is a proof of God's love as well as of His righteous anger, and through it men may be purified and ennobled. Pain, even though it be the pain of punishment, has an educative as well as a penal value. By means of the "cords of affliction"

He openeth their ears to instruction.  
He delivereth the afflicted by his affliction  
And openeth their ear by adversity.

(Elihu xxxvi. 10, 15.)

In so teaching Elihu made a notable contribution towards the general subject of the problem of pain and the justice of God, though, as he stated it,

his contention was not relevant to Job's particular case.

As to Job, his main achievement in the actual argument lies in the silencing of the friends and in his crushing and unanswerable refutations of their main position that all suffering must needs be penalty.

Incidentally Job touched on three most important points.

(1) He claimed that God was too just to desire justification of His actions at the expense of injustice to an innocent and righteous sufferer, that God required no special pleading in His defence.

Will ye speak unrighteously for God

And talk deceitfully for Him ?

Will ye respect His person ?

Will ye contend for God ? . . .

He will surely reprove you,

If ye do secretly respect persons.

(xiii. 7, 8, 10.)

(2) As the evidence of the injustice of God in His dealings with men almost overpowered him, Job flung defiance at this apparently unjust, omnipotent Being.

Know now that God hath *perverted my right* . . .

I call out violence but am not heard,

I cry for help but there is no justice.

. . . Why do ye persecute me as God does ?

(xix. 6, 7, 22.)

But at the same time with a glorious inconsistency he clung to his belief in One above all and behind

all to whom, as the champion of right and justice, he might commit his cause.

Even now behold my witness is in Heaven,  
And I have a Sponsor on high. (xvi. 19.)

The God whom he had defied is really a God who had no existence save in such a narrow and rigid theology as was then current. Job was struggling towards a higher and truer conception of God, and he reached it because he refused to worship or submit himself to any Deity whose moral sense was lower than his own. The teaching of the poet here surely is that any conception of God which does not satisfy men's moral ideals is not true, even though it should happen to be orthodox, that God is higher than the best men know, and juster than the highest justice men can conceive. As Fairbairn says, the poet here "struggles towards the only conception of God which has hope for the universe, a conception which, reached, may leave a man to many a conflict with evil, but can never leave man to despair."\*

(3) Thirdly, Job for a moment seems to catch a glimpse of the way out of the worst difficulties of this great problem. Perhaps, perhaps,—he hardly dare to hope it,—perhaps the afterwards may hold possibilities of the vindication of his righteousness, a vindication that will carry with it proof that the Almighty is just after all. He hardly thinks of eternal life, but he hopes that in his case Sheol will not cut him off from ultimate justification at the hands of God, and that he will be allowed to know it.

\* *City of God.* p. 182.

I know that my vindicator liveth  
 And that he shall stand up at the last upon (my) dust.  
 Yea another shall arise as my witness,  
 And as my Sponsor shall I behold God,  
 Whom *I* shall see on my side (lit. for me)  
 And mine eyes shall behold no longer estranged.

(xix. 25-27.)

This is as far as Job gets in the solution of his difficulties and doubts. At the end of the poem, God is represented as speaking to Job and answering him; but He offers to Job no explanations of his sufferings, no reasoned proof that they are in accord with divine justice and righteousness. God simply sets before him the vastness and complexity of the universe which He rules and the infinite diversity of the creatures which He has made, and for which He cares, the wonder and mystery of the natural world which depends solely on Him.

Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth ?  
 Who determined the measures thereof ?  
 Have the gates of death been revealed unto thee ?  
 Where is the way to the dwelling of Light ?  
 Who hath begotten the drops of dew ?  
 Who provideth for the raven her food,  
 When her young ones cry unto God ?  
 Who hath sent out the wild ass free . . .  
 Whose house I have made in the wilderness ?  
 Hast thou given the horse his might ?  
 Hast thou clothed his neck with the quivering mane ?  
 Doth the eagle mount up at thy command  
 And make her nest on high ?  
 Hast thou an arm like God ?  
 Deck thyself now with [my] excellent dignity.

(Job xxxviii. 4, 5, 17, 19, 28, 41;  
 xxxix. 5, 6; 19, 27; xl. 9, 10.)



(In other words, what wouldst thou do with all this universe if thou wert God ?)

God's answer does not seem to reveal anything fresh to Job, it does not even contain a formal assurance that Job is righteous after all and that his sufferings are not punishment. Yet Job is well satisfied, and his heart is set at rest. His mind is "turned from the problem of evil to the problem of good." He sees that there is still much that he cannot understand in the complex government of the world; no mortal man could tell the whys and wherefores of God's intricate dealings. "From his dark doubts and brooding speculations he is summoned . . . to find in the majesty of nature a lesson of humility, and in the eternal fact of the beauty of the world a fresh sense of the glory and goodness of God."\* Somehow he recovers his sense of communion with God, a God whom he can trust though His ways are dark and beyond understanding. "Whether it is another and more wonderful God who is revealed to him, or he attains a deeper and more sympathetic insight into the mind and character of God, he can scarcely tell. What he does know is that though his suffering is neither removed nor explained, God has come to him not as a Foe but as a Friend."†

The writer of this wonderful book does not pretend to have arrived at an adequate solution of the problem of the suffering of the righteous and the innocent in relation to the Justice of God. The

\* Strahan, *Job*, p. 314.

† *Ibid.*, p. 345.

problem will probably always remain in part at least insoluble. What he does do is to suggest a way of escape from the intolerable weight of the problem which shall neither be at the expense of the innocent sufferers nor of our belief in the perfect justice and fairness of God.

The book prepares the way for the belief that the sufferings of our Lord which culminated on the Cross were in perfect accord with the Justice of God and the sinlessness of Christ, though exactly why it was morally necessary for Him to suffer in order to redeem and save this sinful world is even yet a mystery.

The definite statement that suffering not only did not necessarily imply the guilt of the sufferer, but might also have a redemptive value is set forth in Isaiah liii., a poem which has much in common with Job, but seems to take us a step further than does that book. The figure of the sufferer portrayed in the chapter would seem to resemble both Jeremiah and Job. Like Job, he is represented as stripped of all that makes life worth living, of health and wealth and reputation. He is afflicted with some disfiguring disease. His misfortunes are thought by his contemporaries to be the penalty for his own sins. Like Jeremiah he "was as a trustful lamb which they led to the slaughter" (Jer. xi. 19), and men "cut him off from the land of the living" (Jer. xi. 19). The poet recognises that suffering is the result of sin but denies that the sufferer must needs be the sinner. He claims that in this case at least, where the sufferer is innocent and righteous and well-pleasing

to Jahveh, his suffering is vicarious, and he hints that it is in some mysterious way redemptive.

The sufferer in short is shown to be, not the innocent victim of the injustice of Jahveh, but the most honoured and necessary agent of the Love of Jahveh in the task of winning and redeeming the world.

- liii. 2     He had no beauty that we should regard him  
             Nor appearance that we should delight in him.
- lii. 14     His aspect was more disfigured than any man's  
             And his visage than any human being's.
- liii. 3     He was despised and rejected of men,  
             A man of sorrows and known by reason of sickness;  
             Like one from whom men hide their face,  
             He was despised and we esteemed him not.  
             Yet it was our sicknesses that he bore  
             And our sorrows that he carried;  
             But we esteemed him stricken,  
             Smitten of God and afflicted.  
             But he was wounded for our transgressions,  
             Crushed because of our iniquities.  
             The chastisement of our peace was upon him,  
             And with his stripes have we been healed.  
             All of us like sheep had gone astray,  
             We had turned each to his own way,  
             And Jahveh treated him as responsible  
             And made him bear the guilt of us all.  
             He was oppressed yet he humbled himself,  
             Persecuted yet opened not his mouth;  
             As a lamb he was brought to the slaughter,  
             And as a sheep before her shearer he was dumb.  
             By oppression his judgment was taken away,  
             And who regarded his fate,  
             That he had been cut off from the land of the living,  
             For our transgressions had been smitten to death?

And his grave was appointed with transgressors,  
And with the wicked his corpse was cast forth.  
Although he had done no violence,  
Neither was any deceit in his mouth.  
Yet Jahveh was pleased to crush him  
Through giving himself as an offering for guilt.  
He shall see posterity and length of days,  
And the pleasure of Jahveh will be realised in his  
hands.

My righteous servant shall make many righteous  
And himself will bear the burden of their iniquities. . .  
He poured out his life blood  
And was numbered with transgressors  
And himself bore the sin of many  
And interposed for transgressors.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE LOVE OF GOD

#### A.—THE BASIS AND CONTENT OF THE LOVE OF GOD.

We cannot tell for certain whether love entered into the earliest Hebrew conception of Jahveh. If it did so, it was not the love which casts out fear, for, as we have seen, there are still traces in the Old Testament of a time when the worship of Jahveh was a worship of fear as of a dread destroying power. It is probable that Jahveh's love for His people, when first it came to be conceived of, was more of the nature of favour than anything else. It meant the bestowal upon Israel, to the exclusion of other tribes and nations, of various benefits and particularly of Jahveh's protection from their foes. Many other tribes and nations held similar views with regard to their special deities.

*The Basis of Jahveh's Love.* In itself such "love" was not necessarily ethical. It was thought to depend mainly on two things, at all events in the case of "tribal deities," (1) on the semi-physical relationship of the deity to the tribe, which was established and renewed by Covenant sacrifices of shared blood, in virtue of which the deity became the Goel\* of the tribe, that is to say,

\* Usually translated "Redeemer" in the English Versions.

one who would avenge injury done to the tribe or to any member of it, and who would defend the tribal interests, irrespective of considerations of right and wrong ; (2) on the proper respect paid to the deity in the way of worship and sacrifices and the offering of firstlings, first-fruits, etc., and on the due regard to the observance of taboos on places, persons and foods. Neglect of such things was believed to stir up the wrath of the deity and to lead to a withdrawal of his favour and protection.

In neither of these cases was there any ethical motive for favour shown or favour withheld.

That both these conceptions held a strong place in Hebrew religion is abundantly evident in the Old Testament, especially in connection with the belief in Jahveh's love to Israel which was hardly ever thought of otherwise than as Covenant-Love. Even in later times there was a constant tendency to revert to them not only in the popular religion but among some of the leaders and teachers of the people, even among prophets, priests and psalmists. On the other hand, in spite of all backward movements, there was a strong steady move forwards towards realising the true content and extent of the love of God.

As opposed to the former of these conceptions with regard to the *basis* of Jahveh's Covenant-Love, the prophets, especially the later ones, insisted that Jahveh's love to the Israelites was not based on His Covenant with them, much less on any semi-physical kinship with them, but that His Covenant with them was based on His Love and free choice (Deut. iv. 37). In His love and pity He chose them for His own



purposes and therefore entered into Covenant relations with them. It was, perhaps, for this among other reasons that Jahveh's Covenant with Israel was sometimes described in terms of betrothal.

As for thy nation in the day when thou wast born . . . thou wast not washed in water . . . nor swaddled. No eye pitied thee to do any of these things out of compassion for thee . . . And when I passed by and saw thee . . . I said to thee . . . live and grow up . . . Then I passed by thee and saw thee and behold thou hadst come to the time of marriage . . . so I pledged myself to thee and entered into a covenant with thee . . . and thou becamest mine (Ezek. xvi. 1-8, cf. also Hos. ii. ; Jer. ii. 2, 32).\*

As opposed to the latter of these Covenant ideas, from Amos onwards and to some extent before him there were not wanting men of vision who realised and taught that the continuance of Jahveh's favour and love, so far as Israel's side of the Covenant was concerned, was not dependent on proper observance of sacrificial ritual, taboos and such-like, but far more on the conduct of the people in daily life. In return for His Covenant-Love to them Jahveh required loyal allegiance to Him and looked for love, gratitude and trust. In addition He demanded righteousness and justice, truth and love from His people towards one another. Failing these things, His side of the Covenant became null and void. According to this teaching Jahveh's

\* It is by no means unlikely that this view of Jahveh's covenant with Israel as compared with the relation of other deities with their tribes may in essence go back to Moses.

Covenant-Love was primarily and supremely ethical and spiritual.

It was the *content* of Jahveh's love for them which was the lesson that Israel learned best. He learned the lesson of its *extent* grudgingly. But of the riches of Jahveh's love he delighted to learn and the lessons came chiefly through the inspired interpretation of his experience of that same love.

*The Content of the Love of Jahveh*, even in the earlier and more restricted conceptions of it, cannot well be analysed. There is such a reverent tenderness in the allusions to it and illustrations of it in the Old Testament that one instinctively feels that one is on holy ground, even when one is made painfully aware, as in some instances, how far short those who speak of it are from realising the fulness of it. There is in JE a suggestion that the love of God was so fundamental an element in His character, that it was His glory. Moses is pictured as saying to Jahveh, "Shew me I pray thee Thy glory." Jahveh's answer was, "I will make all My goodness pass before thee, and will proclaim the Name of Jahveh before thee: and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy" (Ex. xxxiii. 18, 19).

On the next day "Jahveh descended in the cloud and proclaimed the name of Jahveh. And Jahveh passed by before him and proclaimed 'Jahveh, Jahveh, a God *compassionate* and *gracious*, slow to anger and *plenteous in loving-kindness*, and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and

transgression and sin.' ” Then follows a hard saying—“ And that will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and upon the children’s children, upon the third and upon the fourth generation ” (Ex. xxxiv. 5-7). But even here it is evident how infinitely the mercy of Jahveh was held to exceed His sterner quality of retributive justice.

Now we have in this passage the three favourite and constantly recurring terms used in the Old Testament for expressing the kind of love which Jahveh exhibits to “ them that love Him.” These are :—

(a) *rachum*—“ compassionate.” It is at root a woman’s word and suggests the most sacred emotions of motherhood. It is wonderful to find it used of the terrible Jahveh.

(b) *channun* “ gracious ” or, more literally, “ favourable.” The noun *chen* is used in the phrase “ finding favour ” with anyone. The corresponding adverb *chinnam* means “ gratis,” “ freely,” “ for nothing.” The suggestion in the word is the sheer uncalled-for generosity of Jahveh’s love or what one might call His gracious “ givingness.”

(c) *rab chesed* “ plenteous in lovingkindness.” *Chesed*, in the first instance, implies “ loyalty ” and has sometimes been rightly rendered “ leal love.” It is the most suitable word to express the idea of Covenant-love. But although this fundamental idea is never quite absent from it, it has come to mean, especially in its later usage, sheer goodness,

kindness, lovingkindness, mercy, grace. In fact, all the most beautiful thoughts connected with love are packed into its compass when it is applied to Jahveh by the writers who knew Him best. It is the word *par excellence* for the love of Jahveh, beside which the others stand incomplete and insufficient. It is to be noticed that Jahveh in our passage is called "plenteous," "abundant" in *chesed*. Similar phrases abound in the connection. His *chesed* is stored up for thousands, it is as great as the heavens (Ps. lvii. 11), the earth is full of it (Ps. xxxiii. 5), it is inexhaustible so that it lasts for ever (Ps. cxxxvi).

The elements in the divine Covenant-love which were most gladly recognised and easily appreciated by the Hebrews are beautifully expressed by such words as those in Deut. xxviii. 63(a) which suggest the benefits accruing from Jahveh's favour and from the love at the back of it,—“Jahveh rejoiced over you to do you good,”—and by passages like that in Deut. xxxii. 9-11 which portray His protective care for His own people.

- 9 Jahveh's portion is His people,  
Jacob is the lot of His inheritance.
- 10 He found him in a desert land  
And in the waste howling wilderness:  
He compassed him about, He cared for him,  
He kept him as the apple of His eye.
- 11 As an eagle that stirreth up her nest,  
That fluttereth over her young,  
He spread abroad His wings, He took them,  
He bare them on His pinions.

## B.—THE DEPTH AND LENGTH OF THE LOVE OF GOD.

The deeper and higher elements in the love of Jahveh for His people may best be studied in the prophecy, life and message of Hosea, who more than any other Old Testament writer has unveiled for us the holy of holies of the Divine Nature. To understand and appreciate his teaching on this subject it is necessary to know something of the circumstances of his life.

The way in which Hosea learnt of the nature and character of God and the experiences which fitted him to understand and pass on his message are a striking contrast with the case of his earlier contemporary Amos. Amos was a prophet of the Elijah type, who learnt to hear and see God through the awful solitudes of the wilderness, and thought of Him in terms of wild, unspoiled, majestic nature. The stern, unchanging, almost relentless side of the divine character was thus what impressed him most. But Hosea learned his lessons in a different school, where the lessons are harder because less simple, when the books are written not on grey limestone rocks but on human lives. Hosea's training ground was in his family life, and his teachers were tragedy, shame and sorrow. His sad story may be gathered from the first three chapters of his book.

Hosea married a woman called Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim whom he seems to have loved passionately (i. 2-4). After the birth of her first child, a son, it gradually dawned on the unhappy husband that his loved wife was unfaithful to him



(i. 6). A daughter was born to her. The little lass received the name of Lo-ruhamah (she who has never known a father's love). Later came another son, to whom he gave the name Lo-ammi (no kin of mine). The names tell their own story. Things went from bad to worse. The wretched woman deserted her husband, leaving her home ruined, and eventually fell into the most utter degradation. There seemed to be nothing for Hosea but to put her away and disown her altogether.

Then Hosea said, I will put away Gomer, for she is not my wife, and I will not be her husband. And on her children I will have no pity, since they are children of whoredom. For their mother hath become a harlot, she who conceived them hath behaved shamefully (Hos. ii. 2, 4-6).

But instead of this, God put it into his heart to try another method (iii. 1). She had deserted him, but he would not desert her; she had brought shame upon him, but he would not give her up. She had ruined his life, but he would still devote it to saving her from herself. Divine love and pity and perhaps hope took hold of his heart, and he searched her out. He had to search her out and *buy* her; she had become reduced to the position of a slave (iii. 2): "So I bought her for 15 pieces of silver, and eight bushels of barley, and a measure of barley" (which altogether make up the average price of a slave). Then by discipline and restraint he patiently endeavoured to restore her to virtue (iii. 3) and to teach her to contend with her base passions (ii. 6), and if possible in due time to bring her to reciprocate his own love and loyalty to her.



Evidently in times past he had tried to win and retain her love by lavish kindness, by giving her everything she could desire (ii. 8). Now he has to try the far harder method of stern discipline, which is sometimes the only form which the truest love can take, but is cruelly hard for those who have only that way in which they may rightly show their love.

Whether the prophet's patient love and self-sacrificing devotion were at length rewarded, we are not told. But what he hoped for is beautifully suggested in ii. 14-20 (spoken of Israel, but quite evidently reflecting the mind of the prophet towards his erring wife).

Therefore I am going to allure her and bring her into the wilderness and speak endearingly to her. . . . Then shall she respond as in the days of her youth. . . . and it shall be in that day . . . she shall call me, my husband . . . and (those others) shall be no more mentioned by their names. And I will betroth her to me forever. Yea, I will betroth her to me in righteousness and in judgment and kindness and mercy. Yea, I will betroth her to me in righteousness.

In this way Hosea was taught the mind, or rather the heart of God, learned something of His patient love, and of the sheer sorrow underlying the seemingly stern judgments which Jahveh was bringing to pass upon Israel. This insight of his into the divine pity has been surpassed by none of the prophets. No one of the Old Testament writers has understood or portrayed so tenderly and sympathetically as he the attitude of God towards the sinner whom He loves.

In the earlier part of his book Hosea uses his own sorrow to illustrate the sorrow of God and the divine attitude towards Israel. He pictures Israel as the spouse of Jahveh, who in the early days when she came up from Egypt responded to him (ii. 15). But now she has become unfaithful to him, making it impossible for Jahveh to show love and pity to her children (i. 6), ("I will no longer have pity on the house of Israel that I should still spare them") and proving all too plainly that they were no true children of his. "Call his name not-my-people, for ye are indeed not my people, and I indeed am not your God." Though nominally the people of Jahveh, Israel in practice served the baals, the deities of the land into which Jehovah had brought her. "She went after them and forgot me, is the oracle of Jahveh" (ii. 13).

Time and again Jahveh declares His intention of bringing judgment upon the guilty nation. The book is full of threats, most of them clear enough in their purport, but somehow, severe as they are, and severe though the accusations launched against Israel are, yet they are nearly always spoken grudgingly, as if it were hard for Jahveh to speak thus, and hard for his prophet to have to proclaim such messages.

Alongside of the condemnation, and intertwined with it, we are shown Jahveh as it were at His wits end, to help and heal the erring nation, while pity and justice struggle together.

I will return to my place, [*i.e.*, Sinai] until they are confounded and seek my presence (Hos. v. 15).

When they are in distress they will quickly seek me saying, Come, let us return to Jahveh, for He hath torn, and He will heal us ; He hath smitten and He will bind us up (Hos. vi. 1).

But apparently it is a vain hope, and we hear Jahveh saying,

What can I make of you, O Ephraim,  
What can I make of you, O Israel,  
Since your love is like a morning cloud,  
Yea, like the dew that goes early away ? (Hos. vi. 4.)

Jahveh longs, and plans for his people to repent, but all in vain. See, too, the heart hunger in his next word.

It is leal love that I delight in, and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God, and not burnt offerings (Hos. vi. 6).

And this a little later on,

Were I to write ever so many instructions as those of a stranger, would they be regarded ? (Hos. viii. 12.)

Perhaps the most wonderful and utterly pathetic of all these passages is that in chapter xi.

They have refused to return to me,  
Therefore the swords shall whirl in their cities,  
And shall devour in their fortresses.  
For my people are *bent* on rebelling against me,  
And upon the Baalim they call with one accord.  
How can I give thee up, O Ephraim !  
How can I give thee up, O Israel !  
How am I to give thee up as Admah,  
And make thee as Zeboim [*i.e.*, as Sodom and Gomorrah].  
My heart exerts itself, my love doth yearn.  
I will not carry into effect the fierceness of my anger.  
I will not turn to destroy Ephraim.  
For God am I, not man.  
Holy in the midst of thee.  
Therefore I will not consume (Hos. xi.).

We here have the suggestion that Hosea recognised that such wonderful forgiving love was not natural to man, and where it was found it was a reflection of God's love, and not *vice versa*.

Passages such as these, with their suggestion of the infinite patience and exquisite tenderness of the Divine Love conjoined with their recognition of the utter antagonism of God to moral evil and of the separation which sin creates between the unrepentant sinner and God shadow forth something of the agelong and tragic problem of the Atonement which was worked out on the Cross of Jesus Christ.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE LOVE OF GOD (*Continued*)

#### A.—THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD.

Hosea did not confine himself to the analogy of the relations of husband and wife in his attempt to express the depth of Jahveh's love towards His people. He used also that of father and son, and in so doing makes what is, as it were, the first rough sketch of the picture of God as the Father which is central in the teaching of Jesus' complete revelation of Him. The metaphor was previously suggested in Ex. iv. 22, 23 (J) where Jahveh speaks of Israel as His firstborn, to show that He will avenge injury done to Israel as a father would avenge an injury done to his first-born son. Hosea has taken up the image and transformed it. It is frequently used in later writings, and in most of them may be traced directly or indirectly to the influence of Hosea.

Hosea speaks of Jahveh's relations towards Israel in early days as those of a father towards a baby son, to express something of the tender and protecting care which He had shown to His people and to contrast it with their present ungrateful forgetfulness of Him. Implied, though not actually expressed, is the thought of the same love, now robbed of its joy

and longing for an answering love that understood even a little. The passage in Hosea is a mere fragment, but it is an exquisite fragment.

When Israel was young then began I to love him,  
And from Egypt I called my son.  
It was I who taught Ephraim to walk,  
I used to take them on my arms,  
But they did not know that it was I that healed them.

(Hos. xi. 1, 3.)

[The picture is of a little child trying to walk and tumbling down and hurting itself.]

In vii. 15 we find a picture of a further stage when the boy nation was older and the Father instructed him in manly exercises.

And it was I who trained them and strengthened their arms.

Yet towards me they think ill.

Isaiah later used the same image: "I have nourished and reared children, and they have rebelled against me" (Is. i. 2). So also does the Deuteronomist and with less bitterness: "Jahveh thy God did carry thee as a man doth carry his baby boy" (Deut. i. 31). Moses had been pictured in JE as acting thus for Israel. Moses said, "Have I brought them forth that thou shouldest say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom as a nursing father carrieth the suckling child, unto the land which thou swarest unto their fathers" (Num. xi. 12)? Now the metaphor has been transferred to Jahveh as more appropriate!



Jeremiah, Hosea's spiritual disciple, sympathetically followed up Hosea's thought and enlarged on it.

I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus  
Thou hast chastened me and I was chastised . . .  
Let me return and I will return since thou art Jahveh my  
God.

. . . I am ashamed, yea even confounded because I bear  
the reproach of my youth.

Is not Ephraim my dear son ? Is he not a darling child,  
So that often as I speak of him I must remember him ?  
Therefore my heart yearneth for him ; I must be merciful  
to him.

(Jer. xxxi. 18-20.)

In the same connection Jahveh is represented as saying " Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love : therefore with love have I drawn thee " (v. 3). Other later passages where Jahveh's conduct and attitude to Israel is likened to that of father and son, or more generally of a father and his little child, are not infrequent especially in second Isaiah.\*

The thought of the Fatherhood of God was not confined to the Hebrews. But where it occurred elsewhere, as a rule, it was simply a poetic way of describing the deity as the ultimate source of existence, and it did not even necessarily imply a belief in the personality of the deity, or else it was used of the god as being an actual physical ancestor of the family or nation which counted him its " Father."

\* Deut. xxxii. 6 ; Is. xliii. 6 ; lxiii. 7, 16 ; lxiv. 8 ; Mal. i. 6, ii. 10 cf. also Psalm ciii. 13 ; Prov. iii. 12 ; Is. xlix. 15 and lxvi. 13 ; should also be noticed, where Jahveh is compared to a mother with her infant,

In the Old Testament the relationship which the Fatherhood of God implies is in nearly all cases\* an entirely ethical one, and the thought is mainly used as a suitable way of expressing something of Jahveh's protective care and steadfast self-sacrificing love towards His people. It was in this ethical sense that Christ used it.

On the other hand, the thought of God's Fatherhood in the Old Testament is restricted in two ways.

(1) It was used of the attitude of God to Israel, and wonderfully deep and strong though it is, it was hardly ever thought to include other nations than Israel. It was still exclusive and limited.

(2) It was used almost invariably to describe God's relation to the nation as a whole.† The application of the thought of God's Fatherhood to individual persons as such is hardly ever even suggested in the Old Testament.

It was left for our Lord to extend it from the community to the individual human being, as for Him also it was left to show that the loving Fatherhood of God and all that that implied embraced all mankind, whether they knew it or knew it not.

## B.—THE BREADTH OF THE LOVE OF GOD.

The realisation of the breadth of God's love by no means kept pace with the realisation of its depth. The covenant love of Jahveh seemed necessarily to

\* But cf. Deut. xxxii. 6 ; and Mal. ii. 10.

† Occasionally to the persons who represent the nation, *e.g.* David and his seed.

involve hate. To love and protect the tribe obviously meant to war against its foes and to hate them. All the more was this the case when the god was thought of as part and parcel of the tribe. The ruthless cruelty towards the foes of Israel which was attributed to Jahveh was thought to be in no wise inconsistent with His love and tender pity for Israel. Some of the strongest expressions with regard to this hostility of Jahveh towards Israel's enemies are to be found in Deuteronomy, which was to some extent written in the light of Hosea's teaching on the love of God, and itself lays no little stress on mutual love between Jahveh and His people (Deut. vii. 10, 16 ; xiii. 12-17 ; xx. 10-18).

(1) As we have already suggested, the Covenant-Love of Jahveh was conceived of as exclusive. Monolatry on the part of Israel was somewhat naturally felt to be correlative to an exclusive love and favour on Jahveh's part. As monolatry passed into monotheism, however, the apparent logic of such a position gradually began to break down. The thought of God's world-wide relations and especially of His position as Creator of the universe and of all men, militated against this exclusive view of His goodness and kindness. If seed-time and harvest were among the gifts of His love, it was evident that He did not confine them to Israel alone. All men without distinction received the gifts which Jahveh the Creator had scattered with an open hand (Ps. civ. 10-end).

A small group of Psalms, mostly late, seem to have lost the exclusive note, though it is doubtful

how far they have really broken with particularism. They recognise that as all the earth belongs to Jahveh, so also all the nations of the earth are His. He is Lord and King of all men, and for them the knowledge of that fact should be an occasion of gladness and rejoicing. It is not suggested that Jahveh can be towards other nations exactly as He is towards Israel, but yet they were not altogether outside the scope of His goodness and to some extent they might come under His beneficent rule. The clearest example of this is in Psalm lxvii., though even there the particularist note is not altogether absent.

- 1 God be merciful to *us* and bless *us*  
And cause His face to shine upon *us*,
- 2 That thy way may be known upon earth,  
Thy saving health among *all nations*.
- 3 Let *the peoples* praise thee, O God,
- 4 O let *all the nations* be glad and sing for joy.  
For Thou shalt judge *the peoples* with equity  
And govern *the nations* upon earth . . . .
- 7 God shall bless *us*,  
And all the ends of the earth shall fear Him.\*

This is hardly the recognition that God's love is universal in extent, but it is at least the beginning of the recognition of the fact that something akin to His love has a world-wide sweep.

(2) Another definite step in the same direction is to be found in second Isaiah, particularly in the Servant Poems.

The prophet shows himself to be the spiritual heir of early prophets such as Hosea and Jeremiah in

\* See also Pss. lxvi. 1-9; and xcix-c.

recognising how the hand of God had been in the history of his race even from earliest times ; how God had chosen Israel and had nursed the infant race and had watched over it and cared for it and trained it as it grew to maturity ; how His relations with it had been especially close and tender. He develops still further the conception that Israel was under the special protection and care of Jahveh, even showing how the great kings and empires of the world and their doings had been over-ruled by Jahveh for Israel's sake.

Thus saith Jahveh to His anointed,  
To Cyrus whose right hand I have holden  
To subdue nations before him . . . .  
For Jacob my servant's sake and Israel my chosen  
I have called thee by thy name.

(Is. xlv. 1, 4.)

His teaching is quite definitely that Israel was the chosen race, the elect people, a doctrine which could all too readily lend itself to the strengthening of particularistic ideas as to the exclusiveness of the Love and Favour of Jahveh.

On the other hand, however, the prophet built upon the foundation laid by Amos in recognising also the fact that Jahveh is above such a parochial or unfair attitude as favouritism to any one nation—the fact that God is no respecter of persons or nations.

One of the great contributions of this prophet to true religion is that he combined and harmonised these two apparently opposing convictions. His message is that Israel had not been picked out from among the other nations of the world merely for his



own advantage, so that he might selfishly enjoy certain benefits denied to the others or be favoured at their expense. On the contrary his choice was for the sake of all the other peoples of the earth, his training, all his unique experiences as a nation were to fit him for service for God's use, that the world might be brought to the knowledge of the truth through him. His choice in fact, instead of being a token of the exclusiveness of Jahveh's love, was, on the contrary, a token of its inclusiveness and was to serve the interests of His universal loving purposes for all mankind. In other words Israel had been chosen because God loved the world.

(a) Hearken to me ye coastlands,  
 And listen, ye distant people . . .  
 He said unto me, Thou art my servant  
 Israel in whom I will glorify myself . . .  
 And now saith Jahveh  
 (He who formed me from birth to be his servant) . . .  
 I will make thee the *light of the nations*  
*That thy salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.*

(xlix. 1, 3, 5, 6.)

(b) Behold my servant whom I uphold,  
 My chosen in whom I take delight,  
 I have put my spirit upon him,  
 That he may set forth judgment [*i.e.* true religion]  
*to the nations.*  
 He will not cry aloud nor roar  
 Nor let his voice be heard in the street.  
 A bruised reed he will not break  
 And smoking flax he will not quench.  
 Faithfully will he set forth true religion,  
 He will not lose vigour nor be crushed



Until he establish true religion in the earth.  
And for his teaching the coastlands are waiting . . .  
I Jahveh have called thee in righteousness,  
I have made thee a pledge to the peoples,  
A Light to the nations.

(Is. xlii. 1-4, 6.)

There is appropriately appended to this, a song of praise beginning

Sing to Jahveh a new song  
And His praise, from the end of the earth.

(Is. xlii. 10.)

Such teaching as this is unfortunately almost unique in the Old Testament. When Jesus made it fundamental to His Gospel it was revolutionary.

3. Perhaps the high-water mark of the realisation in the Old Testament of the extent of the love of God and even more particularly of the fact that God is such that He has a profound love and pity for human beings as human beings quite apart from the fact of their belonging to the chosen people, is to be found in the book of Jonah.

The book was written with the express purpose of protesting against the particularism of Judaism which virtually denied common "humanity" to the One God and Creator of all men. The writer brings before his readers the picture of a great heathen city, Nineveh. He does not describe the riches, pomp, and pride of the place as other prophets had done who had thought of it as a menace to Israel and Israel's world. It is rather the thought of the hundreds of thousands of ordinary human folk who

made up the population of the vast city, which he brings before the mind of his readers. (Jon. iii. 3 ; and iv. 11.) And these countless human beings, though they were outside of the Covenant, he shows to be men, capable of repentance towards God. "And when God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way, he repented of the evil which he said he would do unto them" (Jon. iii. 10). The book describes the effect of their escape upon Jonah, and closes with God's own vindication of His love and pity to His jealous prophet. Jonah could not bear to see the love promised to Israel alone and cherished by her, shared at all with the heathen. So he sulked and would take no further responsibility for, nor interest in his work. In fact he acted the part of the Elder Brother in the Parable of the Prodigal Son. The gourd-incident brings out the utter narrowness and pettiness of such an attitude of mind, and it is left compared with the breadth of Jahveh's heart. "And Jahveh said *Thou* carest for a gourd for which thou hast not laboured, nor hast thou *brought it up*\* and shall not *I* care for Nineveh the great city in which there are more than twelve times ten thousand beings who know not their right hand from their left—and much cattle too" ?

"We are left," as Sir G. A. Smith says, "with the grand vague vision of the immeasurable city with its multitude of innocent children and cattle and God's compassion brooding over all."†

\* Cf. the prophetic picture of the child Israel.

† Book of the Twelve Prophets, Vol. II., p. 541.

<sup>32</sup>  
~~22~~ In this nameless writer with such a splendid yet simple message of the universal extent of God's Love and Pity have we not a true forerunner of Him who revealed the Father in all His fulness, and whose message is best represented in the words " God so loved the world " ?

## CHAPTER XIII

### CONCLUSION

Looking back over the ground that has been covered, we note that most of the revelation of God which came to these men of the Old Testament came apparently along the line of experience. These men were "taught of God" to see Him and understand Him, partly through Nature, but more often and with more convincing and illuminating effect through the experiences of their Nation and through their own experiences as individuals. Revelation vouchsafed in this way is in the nature of things gradual and cumulative, and when it concerns the big fundamental things can normally only come through a succession of seers, when one generation is heir to the truth revealed to its predecessor and hands on that revelation, enriched by new experience and fresh insight, to the generation that comes after.

How far direct, as opposed to indirect, revelation and illumination was granted to the Old Testament Prophets and Seekers after God, it is impossible to say for certain. The question is really of secondary importance. Whether the knowledge of the truth of God came by intuition or deduction or both, in most cases the validity of it was confirmed by actual experience of life and sometimes also by mystical fellowship with God.

The history of revelation must usually be derived from the human side; in other words it must be a history of perception, the record of what men came to see rather than primarily of what God has revealed. On the other hand the truths which were seen were eternal facts which were actually there to be seen by all who had eyes to see, and furthermore it was by the infinite patience of God that men were trained to look at these Divine verities and to perceive and understand them.

We further note, in almost all of these studies, that the gradual process of revelation and perception is seen to be unfinished and that in each case it was only in our Lord Jesus Christ that there was completion and perfection. But in all cases the direction has been found to be Christwards. In this sense to speak of no other it is the literal truth, that the Law and the Prophets and the Psalms point to Christ. All such studies finally lead us towards Him, that is, if the Old Testament be read as it was written—progressively. Otherwise this vital fact, a fact which indeed gives the Old Testament its chief value, is seriously obscured.

It may be asked, What was the purpose of this previous, partial revelation? Why this gradual development? Why did not Jesus come much earlier with His full revelation? Was not all the long Old Testament process a waste of time? Why was it only after long ages of dim twilight and of gradually dispersing darkness that the full blaze of sunshine broke upon a corner of the world instead of coming at once?

The questions are fair ones. The answer seemingly lies not in the inability or unwillingness of God to reveal Himself or to give Himself to men but rather in the nature of human beings. A celebrated preacher with a congregation which was much above the normal in its responsiveness and spiritual capacity has left it on record that it took him many years of steady instruction from the pulpit to get a new conception into the hearts and minds of his people. The human race arrives at its vital beliefs very gradually and slowly. It clings tenaciously to that which it has once grasped, but anything new has the greatest difficulty in finding permanent lodging in the human heart, and much more in the case of a community than of an individual. This is particularly true in the case of truths and beliefs which cannot be verified except in so far as they fit human experience and satisfy the deeper human instincts. It takes long, moreover, for the human race to adjust itself, its thoughts and its life, to an incoming fragment of vital truth. Such a new truth has to be tested (and the testing is a very long process) by the older half-truths and imperfect apprehensions of truth which it may have to displace, in so far as these are tangled with error, or with which it may have to harmonise, in so far as they are still akin to spiritual realities.

God gave to men the revelation of Himself as they were able to bear it, and in so far as they responded to it. The more they received and used, the more was given to them, until in time the fullest revelation of God vouchsafed to men came in the person of Jesus



Christ. Had Jesus come earlier in the history of the human race, and in particular of the Jewish people, He would have been an anachronism, for men would not yet have been ready or able to apprehend the meaning of His life and teaching. It would have been, in part at least, wasted upon them.

When Jesus actually came there was at least a little group of men and women, the heirs of the true prophetic tradition, who were ready for Him, though they had still much to learn and much to unlearn.

In a very real sense He built His church upon the foundation of the Prophets or in other words on the Old Testament revelation of God of which the Prophets were the recipients and the interpreters.

FINIS

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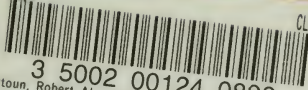
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